Social and Community Indicators for Evaluating Women's Work in Communities

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(with the collaboration of Nadine Goudreault)

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PREFACE

Good public policy depends on good policy research. In recognition of this, Status of Women Canada instituted the Policy Research Fund in 1996. It supports independent policy research on issues linked to the public policy agenda and in need of gender-based analysis. Our objective is to enhance the public debate on gender equality issues and to enable individuals, organizations, policy makers, and policy analysts to participate more effectively in the development of policy.

The focus of the research may be on long-term, emerging policy issues, or short-term, urgent policy issues that require an analysis of their gender implications. Funding is awarded through an open, competitive call for proposals process. A non-governmental, external committee plays a key role in identifying policy research priorities, selecting research proposals for funding, and evaluating the final report.

This paper emanated from a call for proposals in April 1997 to study the gender dimensions of the relationship between the changing role of the state, and the changing nature of women's paid and unpaid work and their vulnerability to poverty. Researchers were asked to identify policy gaps, new policy questions or trends, propose frameworks for the evaluation, analysis and critique of existing policies, or develop pragmatic alternatives to existing policies or new policy options.

Status of Women Canada funded seven research projects on this issue. They examine Canadian legislation surrounding women who work at home for pay, work and aboriginal women, the social versus the economic gain associated with the social economy, women in the garment industry, disability-related policies, restructuring and regulatory competition in the call letter industry, and the relationship between unpaid work and macro-economic policies. A complete list of the research projects is included at the end of this report.

We thank all the researchers for their contribution to the public policy debate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish first of all to thank the women of the Comités régionaux d'économie sociale of seven Quebec regions who agreed to participate in our focus groups in May and June 1998. Their comments and analyses played a vital part in identifying qualitative tools for measuring "social profitability." We also thank the participants in our two validation groups; in the last stage of our research each kindly devoted an entire day to responding to our first draft set of social profitability indicators.

Thanks also to the advisory committee for this study, comprised of representatives of women's groups in the social economy: Ginette Bergevin of the Regroupement des groupes de femmes de la région de Québec, Christine Pruneau of the Table de concertation du mouvement des femmes de la Mauricie, and Hélène Dumais of the Centre local de services communautaires of Longueuil Ouest and ex-advisor on social economy to the Table de concertation des groupes de femmes de la Montérégie.

Special thanks to Professor Danielle Fournier of the École de service social at the Université de Montréal; to Josée Belleau, former liaison officer with l'R des Centres de femmes du Québec; and to Bill Ninacs, community development professor and adviser, for casting light at various times during this study. Their insights were most valuable.

Last, we thank all of the individuals, too many to list here, who gave generously of their time for interviews. Their names appear at the beginning of Section III of this report (note 65).

ABSTRACT

This study deals primarily with research on non-economic or non-financial indicators for evaluating the *social* profitability of work performed by women's groups in the field of community "social infrastructure," that is, the field of human and social development of individuals and communities. The study focuses on development of *social* wealth criteria from a feminist perspective.

Focus group field research was conducted with 44 social economy activists in seven regions of Quebec. This type of research enabled us to identify the type of measurement tools most useful for our research objectives: indicators of social contribution and collective impact. We then turned to the community indicators trend and the literature emerging from it to map basic reference points for a set of indicators of the contribution of women's groups to quality of life and the communal social fabric. We were thus able to sketch out a set of *desired* (i.e., not yet "measured") indicators as the conclusion of our exploratory research.

Our recommendations concern the necessity of not reducing the social economy solely to its economic aspect, but instead expanding it to include its social aspect. They also address the need to provide communities with the tools to undertake a democratic process of developing measures of quality of life and social contribution of community groups. Further recommendations address the need for governments, statistics agencies and the various research councils to promote development of qualitative indicators of quality of life and social contribution.

SUMMARY

Context, subject and scope of the study

In June 1995 in Quebec, the Women's March Against Poverty launched a process seeking official recognition and definition of the social economy. The new viewpoint emerging from this process is based on the concept of "collective entrepreneurship." Referring to practices of the market economy and its objective of financial profitability, this viewpoint has served to disadvantage women's groups and organizations whose activities focus on the human and social development of individuals and communities.

This focus was central to one of the major demands of the Women's March: to strengthen and develop the "social infrastructure" of services to individuals and communities, "with jobs accessible to women immediately." The primary objective of these services is social rather than financial profit. Underlying this demand was a different vision of the economy, one not limited to business transactions and financial profits but which includes unpaid human activities that "produce" quality of life and quality of the communal social fabric. Such activities yield a social profit. What was involved was thus a plan for promoting economic equality for women, since the social infrastructure sector is a major area of employment for women.

This is the context for our current study. Diverging from the traditional approach, it seeks to measure, in other ways than financial yield and "solvency," women's work in the social and community infrastructure. The study aims not only to offer technical tools but also to enrich a feminist approach to the social economy and development. It thus focuses on research into social wealth criteria from a feminist perspective.

Research findings

After searching the intersecting research fields of our survey, and providing an overview of the literature on the subject, we conducted a focus group field survey with 44 social economy activists in seven Quebec regions. This enabled us first to clarify for ourselves their thinking on the subject, how needs are expressed in terms of "social profitability" indicators, and what type of measurement tools would be most useful for this purpose. Indicators of the social contribution and collective impact of their work were targeted.

To a large extent, the main reference points for a set of indicators of the contribution of women's groups and mixed-gender community groups were established in accordance with the community indicators trend's methods and experiments (drawing on the tradition of the popular education movement and its civic practices), as well as with the resulting literature. We were thus able to sketch out a set of desired (i.e., not yet measured) indicators, which were then submitted for a first round of validation. The purpose of the set of indicators is to establish guidelines that will eventually enable women's groups and mixed community groups to identify, in their own practices, the social profitability of their work in the communities.

Recommendations

The recommendations are divided into two groups.

I - Recommendations for broadening the overall perspective of the social economy, its priorities, its targets and its criteria for granting funding

- The Chantier de l'économie sociale and the Government of Quebec should put the spotlight back on the social and collective issues of the social economy, and should modify accordingly the existing priorities, targets and criteria for granting funding in the social economy. This would allow projects that are socially, but not necessarily financially, profitable to be eligible for funding, without being required to achieve financial profitability.

II - Recommendations for developing qualitative instruments for measuring social activities

- Financial resources should be made available to communities to undertake a democratic process of measuring the quality of life and social contribution of women's and mixed community groups.

- In their situational analyses and fund-granting processes, both federal and provincial governments should adopt qualitative indicators of the social contribution of women's and mixed-gender community groups.

- In all their programs, the different research councils (e.g., the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Conseil québécois de la recherche sociale, etc.) should promote development of research on indicators of quality of life and social contribution.

- Statistics Canada, Statistique Québec and the various other provincial statistics agencies should develop the field of qualitative measurement of social activities.

"The social infrastructure demanded was infrastructure [constituting] a public extension of women's private role, in which women have developed skills making them capable of holding jobs today. These fields are underpaid."

(A participant in one of our focus groups)

"An assessment of women's contribution should go far beyond this economic contribution: it must embrace a recognition of their vital contribution in creating and nurturing life and in sustaining social relationships. In valuing much unpaid work, especially such activities as caring for children or the sick and maintaining the community, the human perspective of valuation should always supersede the economic perspective."

(Human Development Report, 1995*)*

I. INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH

In June 1995, in response to the Fédération des femmes du Quebec (FFQ), women's groups throughout Quebec organized a Women's March Against Poverty, which culminated in a big rally in front of the Quebec National Assembly building.

One of the women's groups' nine demands, to create and strengthen community "social infrastructure . . . with jobs open to women immediately, " triggered a process that led to official recognition of the social economy by the Government of Quebec. The term "social infrastructure" referred to "resources put in place by communities to enhance quality of life," and focused on the social and human development of individuals and communities.[1]

In this recommendation lie the origins of the process that led to formal recognition of the social economy by the government. However, the social economy has a long history in Quebec.

To better understand the particular features of the Women's March demands, their outcomes and the origins of this study, we shall briefly review the development of the social economy concept in Quebec.

A. Context and situation

1. Concept of the social economy in Quebec[2]

Studies on the history of the social economy in Quebec "make a distinction between the old social economy (mainly mutual insurance companies and co-operatives, dating from the early 20th century) and the new social economy (mainly community groups and community economic development groups, which have greatly increased in number since the 1970s)" (D'Amours, 1997, p. 37).

While the "old" social economy – insurance companies and co-operatives – is now one of the chief features of Quebec's economic structure, the "new" social economy, which took shape in the 1960s, follows a different pattern.

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[1] See Women's March Against Poverty, 1995. Some $520 million, the same amount that the Government of Quebec was about to invest in the federal highway infrastructure program, was requested for this purpose. In support of this demand, it was asked at the time whether the "social cement" represented by social and community services to the public was not at least as important as the concrete for bridges and roads. The social infrastructure demand was accompanied by another demand: for "jobs open to women immediately" – sustainable, decently paid jobs not replacing public-sector positions.

[2] This subsection dealing with the background of the concept of the social economy in Quebec draws broadly on the summary prepared by Martine D'Amours on behalf of the Institut de formation en développement économique communautaire (IFDEC). See D'Amours, 1997, pp. 37–43. The subject matter of this document was again taken up in Chapter 1 of the Quebec Government document entitled *Conjuguer l'économie et le social* – an information document for Centres locaux de développement (Ministère des Régions, 1998).

The new social economy that sprang up in the 1960s is generally recognized as having three "generations." First, in cities, came citizens' committees that "demanded not only creation but public control of facilities such as community centres, community clinics, legal clinics, etc." (D'Amours, 1997, p. 39). Another aspect of this first generation of the social economy was rural citizens' actions to stop villages from shutting down.

The second generation (1976-82) is described as "the golden age of community or service groups." These sought to offer "alternative" services that differed from the existing public ones and were "closer to people." One of their ambitions was to "work in a different way while controlling both the purpose of their work and their organization" (D'Amours, 1997, p. 40).

Starting in 1983, the welfare state's labour and employment crisis, as well as the crisis-level marginalization of ever-larger classes of individuals, contributed to the growth of a third generation of groups, called popular and community groups, and (more recently) community and volunteer groups:

> Traditional confrontation strategies co-existed with many new attempts to work together, either with public institutions . . . or with private partners, as in the case of Community Economic Development Corporations (D'Amours, 1997, p. 40).

Economic objectives now were accompanied by social objectives. There was thus a burgeoning of new social economy mechanisms: work co-operatives, worker shareholder co-operatives, Community Economic Development Corporations, job placement enterprises, loan circles, regional and local investment funds, etc.

Last, along with Martine D'Amours, we should note that in the "new" social economy, very often it is women who have started such groups to meet new needs, very "different from those that underlaid enterprises in the old social economy."

2. Women's March Against Poverty and official recognition of the social economy

Public debate on the social economy began in 1995. Discussion increased following the social infrastructure demand by the Women's March Against Poverty and led to formal recognition by the Government of Quebec. This recognition involved three "official" stages:

i) Immediately after the Women's March, in response to the social infrastructure demand, the government promised (during the pre-referendum campaign) $225 million over five years. A Comité d'orientation et de concertation sur l'économie sociale (COCES) and Comités régionaux d'économie sociale (CRES) are formed. COCES' mandate was to make recommendations to the government on the definition and future direction of the social economy in Quebec. It presented its report, *Entre l'espoir et le doute*, in May 1996.

ii) In March 1996, before COCES submitted its report,[3] the government formed a new task force on the social economy as it convened a conference on the social and economic future of Quebec. The mandate of the new task force was to "define and gain recognition for the Quebec model of social economy; to draft an action plan for promoting job creation in the field of social economy; to assemble concrete means for starting up job creation projects; and to give impetus to development of the social economy on solid, sustainable foundations" (Neamtan, ed. 1996).

The task force submitted its recommendations six months later, in October 1996, at the Sommet sur l'économie et l'emploi [Summit on Jobs and the Economy], in a document entitled *Osons la solidarité* (Neamtan, ed. 1996). Following the summit, the task force became the Chantier de l'économie sociale, which sought to ensure follow-up of summit recommendations. The definition of social economy proposed in the document was the one ultimately approved by the government:

The concept of social economy combines two terms that are sometimes seen as mutually opposed:

- **"Economy"** refers to the concrete production of goods or services through the structure of a business, thus contributing to a net increase in a society's wealth.

- **"Social"** refers to the social, and not solely economic, profitability of these activities. This profitability is valued in terms of contribution to democratic development, support for active citizenship, and promotion of values and initiatives for empowering individuals and communities. Social profitability thus helps enhance the quality of life and well-being of the population, particularly through availability of a wider range of services. As with the public sector and the traditional private sector, social profitability may also be valued in terms of the number of jobs created.

Taken as a whole, the field of social economy covers all activities and organizations resulting from collective entrepreneurship (Neamtan, ed. 1996, p. 6).

iii) In April 1997, the Government of Quebec finally adopted the Politique de soutien au développement local et régional [Local and Regional Development Support Policy]. Centres locaux de développement, or CLDs [Local Development Centres], made up of various socio-economic players active within the different regional county municipalities, were given a mandate to support development of individual entrepreneurship (businesses and entrepreneurs) and collective entrepreneurship, or the "promoters of social economy projects" (Ministère des Régions, 1998).

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[3] The report was not endorsed by the government even though it was warmly received by Quebec women's groups and became one of their working tools within the Comités régionaux d'économie sociale.

3. From "social infrastructure" to "collective entrepreneurship"

The Women's March Against Poverty and its social infrastructure demand launched the process leading to the formal recognition and definition of the social economy. At the end of it, women's groups felt they had been tricked. Having originally mobilized in support of the concept of social infrastructure, at the end of the process the groups found themselves faced with the concept of "collective entrepreneurship." What was its significance? What distinguished social infrastructure from the definition of social economy adopted by the Government of Quebec?

Let us re-examine the content of the social infrastructure demand:

> We understand [by social infrastructure] resources put in place by communities to enhance quality of life. The resources may have various missions: combatting inequality and discrimination; overcoming people's social isolation; encouraging mutual aid, empowerment, popular education, a sense of belonging and participation; giving help to sick, elderly or disabled persons; caring for children; teaching literacy; providing shelter or integration services; etc. Obviously, such resources are vital to a community. We are thus talking of social economy, of the quality of human relations rather than the over-consumption of manufactured products. This social economy is an alternative to the notable marginalization of many women in the market economy. (*Women's March Against Poverty*, 1995, p. 5)

Women's groups had thus stamped a specific orientation onto the concept of social economy, calling into question the aims of the market economy. Without seeking to impose their definition on everyone, the women's groups still wanted it to be given a place in the public debate. However, the "social purpose" underlying the official definition of the social economy was very different in nature. Josée Belleau, who helped develop the concept of social infrastructure, explains the difference in viewpoint as follows:

> The Chantier de l'économie sociale opted for a sectoral process drawing on a broader, traditional approach based on some theories from the early 20th century, including the entire co-operative, mutual and association movement. The social purpose of businesses had more to do with collective management of capital and with organization of work than with the social purpose of production. In principle, any collective enterprise could thus claim to belong to the social economy. Further, many collective enterprises operated in the market economy and worked toward objectives of financial profitability and returns. The broader, more traditional definition of the social economy disconcerted women's groups, which instead demanded a social economy focusing on services to individuals and communities, and challenging the purposes of the market economy (Belleau, 1997d, p. 3).

While women felt tricked, it was not because the concept of the social economy had been expanded to cover very diversified sectors,[4] since social infrastructure can be included in this definition. Rather, it was because of the "emphasis placed on the economic nature and financial profitability of collective enterprises, on a more market- or business-oriented view of services, with people seen as clients and consumers" (Belleau, 1997d, p. 5).

By contrast, to be eligible for public or private funding, women's groups active in the social infrastructure sector believed that social and community initiatives – focusing on the social and human development of individuals and their communities, on enhancement of the quality of life and the social fabric of these communities – should not have to meet financial profitability objectives specific to the market economy.

The social infrastructure demand implied a fundamentally different approach to the economy:

> The economy exists apart from the market and the government, and . . . wealth is measured in other ways than by monetary business transactions and financial profits. The economy is also the entire range of unpaid, non-monetary human activities; wealth is also the quality of life, health, culture and environment, which is measured in other ways than by money or property. The financial value currently given to goods and services produced by the market or the government should be re-assessed in light of the human, social, democratic and environmental costs entailed by their production (Belleau, 1997b, p. 275[5]).

Further, the social infrastructure demand was consistent with feminist strategies that had been pursued for 30 years by the women's movement:

> The "social economy" demanded by the Women's March is basically a plan for promoting economic equality for women. . . . The vision carried on many demands made for equality and employment equity for women, as well as social and economic recognition of the fundamental contribution of women to supporting families and communities (Belleau, 1997b, p. 275).

The social infrastructure sector represents a major job pool for women, as many of the jobs in the sector are direct extensions of women's traditional work in the family: educating, caring, listening, comforting, sympathizing, socializing, supporting, organizing services, facilitating, etc.

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[4] The different sectors of the social economy include: forestry; agriculture; culture; extended recycling; environment; housing; built heritage; job placement enterprises; community services offering access to the new information and telecommunications technologies; youth services co-operatives; home, infancy, and pre- and post-natal help; funeral co-operatives; etc. For the complete list of sectors see the appendix to *Osons la solidarité,* Neamtan, ed. 1996.

[5] On this topic, see also Guay, 1997b.

For all practical purposes, the issue of recognizing the invisible work of women in families and communities, which was closely tied to the social infrastructure demand, has also been shelved.

As participants in our focus groups told us, there are now two visions of the social economy, each with its own underlying rationale. On one hand is the "project" rationale, linked with solvent activities, which is espoused by the government and endorsed by the Chantier de l'économie sociale. On the other hand is a social change rationale, based on a plan for promoting economic equality for women, with the objective of building an alternative society in which community strategies, linked with social needs, are the key factors in the economy. This is the rationale behind the social infrastructure demand.

Pricing social economy projects in the health and social fields arose when the government parachuted in home help projects with pricing for services. This has helped short-circuit the search for a non-monetary measure for assessing the social profitability of social economy activities.

The sudden emergence of pricing in this field indicates that the capitalist vision of human relations has been preserved fully intact – a vision in which the person is simply a client or a consumer of services.

In 1998, responsibility for the social economy passed from the hands of the Comités régionaux d'économie sociale into those of Centres locaux de développement, involving various socio-economic players. This change accentuated the economic profitability aspect and downgraded the "social" profitability aspect. That, at least, can be concluded from the Local and Regional Development Support Policy, enunciated in the document *Conjuguer l'économie et le social* (Ministère des Régions, 1998): organizations submitting social economy projects will henceforth be required to have a business plan. Even if it is a question of the social contribution of projects, nowhere is this aspect expressly included in the business plan.

The current study was conducted under the aegis of Relais-femmes and is the result of a partnership between l'R des Centres de femmes, the Fédération des femmes du Quebec and Relais-femmes. The impetus for it is the deep disillusionment of women's groups, accompanied by an equally deep wish to go back on the offensive.

B. Research subject and objectives: identifying social wealth criteria from a feminist perspective

In the current context of the new Local and Regional Development Support Policy, how can we put the "social" back in the spotlight, and again ensure a place for social issues within the social economy – issues such as social utility, social profitability or social wealth? How can we use a different measure for assessing the financial yield and "solvency" of women's work in social and community infrastructure? Women's groups felt there was an urgent need to devote research resources to answering these questions.

To assess the work of women's groups in a different way, what is needed is a different reading of our society's development and "productivity," using a lens other than that of economic profitability and personal profit. This means that consideration must also be given to "wealth." Such an examination is inseparable from the search for new criteria for valuing the civic work of women. As Dominique Meda has commented:

> The development of this sector [the social economy] involves envisaging social as well as economic wealth, and re-examining our wealth indicators, starting with the GDP [gross domestic product]. Otherwise, new jobs of social utility will remain what they are: jobs that are undervalued precisely because of their social purpose in a society that gives top priority to economic factors.[6]

At issue is something that now concerns an ever-growing minority of activists and intellectuals, both women and men. While this study is only exploratory in nature, it seeks to support this reconsideration of social wealth by trying to sketch a few criteria from a feminist perspective.

The study has two objectives.

The first is to enhance women's ability to argue in defence of recognition of their work to support and develop the social fabric of communities. For this purpose, to value their work, new criteria must be provided to replace the traditional financial criteria. This means providing technical tools, or indicators, of their "social" profitability.

The other objective is not only to provide technical tools but also to support a feminist approach to the social economy and development – an approach that so far has not been much developed in Quebec. This was recently emphasized by Lorraine Guay, a long-time community movement activist and analyst:

> We may state with confidence that the women's question has been almost totally eliminated from social economy studies. There is little research and few researchers who, while working on the social economy, have taken into account both the viewpoint of women on the social economy or the economy in general, and the impact of the social economy on women (with the notable exception of Lipietz). It is time to end this "dearth."
>
> The entire issue of the invisible work of women, of their reproductive labour (not just having children but raising them, etc.; not only creating communities but taking care of them) is not taken into account in the prevailing economy, but it often is in the social economy. . . . Who takes care of children and communities, who maintains them around the world? The Beijing Conference told us once again: it is women who do this. But all that work counts for nothing in calculating global wealth or GDP. Still, it is as important to the life of a society as are bridges, highways, computers, etc. This was the

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[6] "Vers la fin du travail ? Débat entre Dominique Meda et Dominique Schnapper." *Sciences humaines*, 78 (December 1997): 1.

> message of the Women's March: we must have the social infrastructure to take care of our social ties. . . .
>
> Much work has been done, especially by the first generation of CRES, and under very difficult conditions (Belley, 1997). But much remains to be done to achieve greater integration of the feminist perspective into the social economy (Guay, 1998).

To date, the issue of the invisible work of women, of their reproductive labour, has not been considered and has scarcely been addressed in social economy studies. And while feminist activists and intellectuals have tackled the question of *tangible* recognition of this work, their efforts have provoked stormy debates that have most often ended with the issue being sidelined.

Many feminist researchers still regard the strategy of recognizing women's reproductive labour as being opposed to the strategy of employment equity. A dominant trend in feminist studies still associates recognition of women's reproductive labour with a strategy that reinforces the traditional division of labour, and that would sound "the death knell of the feminist demand for financial independence."[7]

The issue thus is central to a "feminist contradiction," as it was recently called by researchers and activists working to form a Réseau féministe de chercheuses et d'intervenantes en économie sociale et solidaire (RQCF et al., 1998, p. 7).[8] We must discard this dualistic view that runs through the history of the feminist movement (Toupin, 1993) and consider the work performed by women as a whole, within and outside the labour market.

Within its limitations, this study seeks to give women's groups and mixed community groups more tools for gaining recognition of one of the basic aspects of women's age-old reproductive labour: their work within communities, the civic work of supporting, developing and repairing the social fabric of communities. This study is being undertaken from the perspective and with the objective of recognizing all the work performed by women, wherever it occurs.

C. Social profitability of women's work in the social infrastructure of communities and its measurement: at the intersection of two fields of research

Our research into criteria for valuing the "social profitability" of women's and women's groups' activities in the social economy may be positioned at the intersection of at least two major fields of research: that calling into question the productivity criteria of the existing economic system, and that seeking recognition of the invisible work of women. We shall first describe each and then explain how we have chosen to position the current study.

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[7] For a response to this view, see Bélanger et al., 1998.

[8] The contradiction was expressed as follows: "Should women's work in the domestic field be encouraged, thereby promoting recognition of the 'invisible' work of women, or should an attempt be made to open non-traditional careers up to women? Can gender be deconstructed even in traditional fields of employment? Can non-traditional careers further the cause of women?" (RQCF et al., 1998, p. 7).

1. "Social profitability" concerns the first of the two fields of research: that calling into question traditional economics, its productivity criteria and its wealth indicators, according to which what is productive and wealth-producing is whatever has been involved in a monetary exchange on the market. Consequently, anything outside the sphere of the market does not constitute either "production" or a factor that contributes to a country's wealth.

   Also from the social profitability perspective, our study deals with the re-examination of the prevailing economic system of neo-liberalism and, more generally, re-examination of the foundations of the market economy in which the economy is reduced, more or less, to the search for profits, comfort and personal consumption.

   This vast field of research has been described by intellectuals and activists of both sexes participating in a widespread trend, a huge ideological wave that might be called, for current purposes, the "alternative" economic and social sphere.

   Coming from diverse backgrounds and countries, these people share a common research interest and objective: to place the human being, rather than personal profit, at the centre of the economy. With socialist, pacifist, environmentalist and feminist backgrounds, these people seek an economy in which collective needs, not just personal consumption, are taken into account and met without harming humans or the environment. They seek an economy in which the search for equality and justice takes precedence over each-man-for-himself behaviour; in which the democratic participation of citizens in production decisions replaces the edicts of a few financiers; in which new indicators of social progress must be developed to evaluate more equitably human activities and especially the activities of women, which are rendered invisible by prevailing economic theory. The economy cannot be reduced simply to commercial monetary activities with the primary motive of personal profit.[9]

   It must be stressed, however, that within this vast ideological movement, ecological and feminist theories on the invisible economy have received little attention from university researchers, unions, volunteer groups or politicians.[10] Analysis of the economy is most often done from the standpoint of the role of government, not of reproduction. It is rare to find re-examinations of the bias toward achieving greater productivity, of the policy of growth and jobs at any price, or of their impacts on the over-exploitation of resources.[11]

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[9] Proponents of this broad movement are too numerous to be listed here. As examples, we shall mention only some of the best-known European publications addressing the trend under discussion: Ricardo Pétrella (1992) and the Group of Lisbon (1996); the team of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Jean-Louis Laville, Guy Roustang (1996); Guy Aznar et al. (1997); Dominique Meda (1995, 1999); Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (1993); and Mariarosa and Giovanna Dalla Costa (1995, 1996). Other examples from the United States are: Hazel Henderson (1995), Barbara Brandt (1995) and Silvia Federici (1997). In Quebec, the trend is being studied mainly by teams working with Professors Benoit Lévesque, Yves Vaillancourt and Louis Favreau at the Université du Québec à Montréal and the Université du Québec à Hull. The Women's March Against Poverty was part of this trend, as are the social economy researchers and activists working to establish a Réseau féministe de chercheuses et d'intervenantes en économie sociale et solidaire. Again, this is not a representative or full listing.

Within this ideological framework, a genuine movement – as some have called it, the social indicators movement – with its ups and downs depending on socio-political circumstances, has sought for over 30 years, to develop other criteria to replace gross domestic product for measuring the "progress" of societies. In this regard, a well-known example is the *Human Development Report*, published annually since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). We shall draw on a "community" branch of this movement in the late 1980s – the community indicators trend – to develop our valuation criteria, or indicators, of the work of women and women's groups in communities.

2. Our study also intersects with another field of research: that seeking to recognize the "invisible" work of women, also called reproductive labour. This is a vast field of research that began with the feminist resurgence of the 1970s, pursuing various directions that include research on valuing women's reproductive labour as well as the criteria for measuring it.

   We shall first provide an overview of the literature on the issue of valuing women's reproductive labour.

   In Section III of our study, we shall address different facets of the literature on the community indicators movement. Our review of this literature will set the stage for development of our set of indicators of "social profitability" presented in Section IV.

D. Studies on valuing women's reproductive labour

Historically, research on the question of valuing women's reproductive labour has focused on women's reproductive labour, first in families and then in communities. We shall review various studies in those two fields and then consider analyses of the social impact of the work of women's groups in communities. This will allow us to set out certain aspects of the "social profitability" of this work as well as some indicators of this profitability.

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[10] Examples of studies are the works of Vandana Shiva (1988), Hazel Henderson (1995), Barbara Brandt (1995), and Mariarosa and Giovanna Dalla Costa (1995, 1997). See also the special issue of the periodical *Ecological Economics* (No. 20, 1997) on the theme of "Women, Ecology and Economics," containing various contributions from feminist and ecological economists.

[11] We wish here to thank Josée Belleau for having noted the near-total lack of attention to environmentalist and feminist theories on the invisible economy. This paragraph also draws broadly on her remarks to us on the subject.

1. Valuing women's reproductive labour in families

Research in this field first sought to make visible women's reproductive labour in families, then called housework or domestic work, and later "domestic production" (Vandelac et al., 1985). Making it visible was the first step: until the 1970s, the concept of work covered only paid work, reflecting the premises of national accounting.

This paradox had, however, been noted in 1946 by Arthur Cecil Pigou, a "pioneer of welfare economics,"[12] when he commented on the shortcomings of "a measure of collective welfare that indicates a lessening of this welfare when a man marries his cook" (quoted in Lacasse, 1970, p. 2). Yvon Deschamps had summarized the general opinion of the time in a monologue where he stated, "Mom doesn't have a job, she's got too much work to do."[13]

By highlighting women's work in the family, these analyses in effect changed the terms and direction of the traditional analysis of work and family. Until then, the concept of work had been restricted to paid work; henceforth it would include unpaid work as well. Some even described the shift as a "double departure":

> One innovation, being "epistemological" (in the language of that time), involved analysis of the work performed by women: the aim was to modify traditional sociological conceptions of work and society. The other, being political, saw the exploitation of women as taking place even within the privacy of homes and bedrooms; it strongly insisted that "private life is political," thus radically disputing (at least for some time) the customary forms of political analysis, intervention and action (Chaudron et al., 1984, p. 181).[14]

Women's work of providing material and emotional support within the family was now made visible, but was it "productive"? It is one thing to say that housework, the work of a wife or mother, is indeed work, and another to maintain that it is productive.

In their book-manifesto, *Le pouvoir des femmes et la subversion sociale,* Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James insisted that it indeed was: "Housework is productive work in the Marxist sense of the term, that is work that produces surplus-value" (Dalla Costa and James, 1973, p. 64, note 13).

Women's work was a "source of social productivity, that is, a source of surplus-value-making primarily within the family" (Dalla Costa and James, 1973, p. 65):

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[12] So called in the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report,* 1995, p. 87.

[13] The jest was repeated in 1975 by the Théâtre des cuisines, which made it the title of one of its plays. It gained recognition throughout Quebec for addressing the issue of women's invisible work and its valuation. See Théâtre des cuisines, 1976.

[14] In 1981, Louise Vandelac attacked the traditional concept of work. See Vandelac, 1981.

> It is often said that […] women in domestic labor are not productive; in fact precisely the opposite is true if one thinks of the enormous quantity of social services which capitalist organisation transforms into privatized activity, putting them on the backs of housewives. […] These are social services inasmuch as they serve the reproduction of labor power (Dalla Costa and James, 1973, p. 69)

Women's work in families is revealed "as being a masked form of productive labour." Women at home are "safety valves for social tensions." Further, "Women, responsible for the reproduction of labor power, on the one hand discipline the children who will be workers tomorrow and on the other hand discipline the husband to work today, for only his wage can pay for labor to be reproduced" (Dalla Costa and James, 1973, pp. 70, 80, 92).

In this view, the objective became "to subvert the productivity of this role," by ruling out paid work outside the home, the classical antidote to the "myth of women's incapacity." The women's movement itself would develop in reaction to this option. It would instead announce "women's rejection of the myth of liberation through work. We have worked enough" (Dalla Costa and James, 1973, pp. 93, 95). Instead, a wage "against housework was demanded"

At the time, to declare that housework was productive was a serious Marxist heresy (since the debate took place in a Marxist context). To that point, orthodox Marxism had regarded housework as having only a use value, not an exchange value.

During the 1970s, this issue triggered serious debate among Marxists over the nature of the productivity of housework: did it have a use and/or exchange value (Malos, 1995)?

There is no need to review this debate, which Eva Kaluzynska summed up in 1980, particularly since its final conclusion was that housework was "non-productive" in the classical Marxist sense, and because the debate itself ended shortly thereafter for lack of new input.

For other reasons as well, the "wage" strategy has not been favoured by the women's movement in general, here[15] or elsewhere. Nevertheless, research has continued on the "productivity" of this work, its recognition and valuation.

We are thinking here, to take the example of Quebec, of the research and lobbying by the Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale (AFEAS), which continues to campaign for recognition of women's work at home via such measures as pensions for housewives, and for inclusion of this work in the GDP (Lamoureux, Gélinas and Tari, 1993). We are also thinking of the symposium, When Women Count, on unpaid work and public policy, organized by the Canadian group Mothers Are Women and Status of Women Canada (SWC).[16] Emerging as well from these historical struggles of the women's movement to gain recognition for the value of this type of work is the commitment made by various countries at the Nairobi and Beijing conferences to find ways of including the unpaid work of women in the national accounts.

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[15] In this regard, see the position of 22 Quebec women's groups in "Gagner son ciel ou gagner sa vie?" in *La Vie en Rose*, 1981, pp. 14–19.

[16] Held in Ottawa, October 17–18, 1997.

These struggles gave impetus to research on tools for measuring the unpaid work of "women" in the family, and then the unpaid work of "households." In this regard, apart from the pioneering study by François Lacasse for the Bird Commission (Lacasse, 1970; Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, 1970), we should mention works by Marilyn Waring (Waring, 1988, 1997), Luisella Goldschmidt-Clermont for the International Labour Office (Goldschmidt-Clermont, 1990) and William Chandler for Statistics Canada (Chandler, 1994). An international conference on measuring and evaluating unpaid work was held in Ottawa in April 1993, sponsored by Statistics Canada and Status of Women Canada (Statistics Canada and Status of Women Canada, 1994). Among other things, SWC has investigated the impact of unpaid work on public policy (Status of Women Canada, 1995). Also to be noted are studies by Duncan Ironmonger (Waring, 1997), and contributions by feminist and ecological economists, published regularly in the periodical *Feminist Economics*, etc.[17] The *Human Development Report* (UNDP, 1995) even devoted an entire chapter to the theme of "Valuing Women's Work."

Step by step, this view of women's unpaid work in the family, focusing on the concept of housework, has given way to other concepts. Women's unpaid work has been analyzed from the perspective of personal services provided within the home, especially to family members who are invalids. The concepts of caring (Balbo, 1975; Graham, 1983; Finch and Groves, 1983; Ungerson, 1983), caregiving or looking after dependent adult relatives (Guberman, 1988; Guberman, Maheu and Maillé, 1991, 1993), or again of "extended mothering" (Bélanger and Boyer, 1989) gradually emerged (Ungerson, 1997).[18] During the 1990s, other concepts were put forward, mainly by feminist and ecological economists, who introduced in their studies the concepts of provisioning, subsistence and sustenance.[19]

This realignment of concepts about women's unpaid work in the family is linked, on the one hand, to structural adjustment measures imposed on countries of the South, which added to the reproductive labour of women and caused a deterioration in their working conditions. On the other, it was linked to the gradual dismantling of the welfare state in countries of the North (a movement that began in the 1970s in the West). To fill gaps in needed social services, many women were now channelled into working as "natural caregivers," as happened in Quebec's shift to ambulatory care (Côté et al., 1998).

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[17] Published by the International Association for Feminist Economics.

[18] The realignment of concepts, from housework to caring, was suggested to us by Ungerson (1997, p. 362). Obviously the references to caring made here are to only a few of an extensive and rapidly growing body of studies recording research on this topic.

[19] On this subject, see the various contributions in the special issue of the periodical *Ecological Economics* (No. 20, 1997), including those of Pietilä, Mellor, Jochimsen and Knobloch, and Nelson.

Various measures for valuing this work, in the form of "financial compensation paid to families having responsibility for a dependent person," have been advanced or even put into practice (Guberman, Maheu and Maillé, 1993; Ungerson, 1997). However, these measures are not universally accepted, and some studies particularly recommend "a debate . . . on payment of caregivers for their caring work" (Côté et al., 1998, p. 105).

2. Valuing women's reproductive labour in communities

The realignment of concepts on women's unpaid reproductive labour is also linked to the increasing awareness of the huge amount of (free) labour performed by women around the world, not only in families but in their communities (Boserup, 1983).

a) Studies on the relationship between women and community development

Women's contribution to communities was mainly understood as philanthropy or volunteer services. It was from this perspective that their contribution was first studied.[20] However, it was at the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women in Copenhagen in 1980 that the world was first asked to acknowledge the huge amount of free work performed by women in both families and communities. It became commonly known that women performed two-thirds of the world's work in terms of hours, that in return they received only one tenth of global income, and that they owned only a hundredth of the world's wealth.

The various UN conferences held in connection with the UN Decade for Women (1975, 1980, 1985, 1995) had the effect of shifting the global view of women from a Western to a Third World focus. It was recognized, for example, that in Africa particularly, women were really in charge of producing that continent's food; that women's work in Haiti, whether "private or public," was a "genuine hidden subsidy to the functioning of the national economy" (Neptune-Anglade, 1986); and that northern Indian women, who supplied food in subsistence economies, were in the front ranks of the struggle against environmental destruction (Shiva, 1988); etc.

The UN Development Programme published an issue of its *Human Development Report* for the most recent UN World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. The document confirmed the immutable gender-based division of labour still found, as always, throughout the world: "Women's greater work burden – more hours, more concurrent tasks" (UNDP, 1995, p. 90). The report further states, "So, men receive the lion's share of income and recognition for their economic contribution – while most of women's work remains unpaid, unrecognized and undervalued" (UNDP, 1995, p. 88). These observations are based on data from 31 countries, both industrialized and developing nations.

It has at last been recognized that the various structural adjustment programs required by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for southern countries, as well as the deficit reduction policies implemented by various northern countries, have the same relative impact on women's lives: "Less money and more work. . . . Women are part of strategies of impoverishment," stresses Lucie Bélanger. She continues, "These policies are based on the assumption that women will somehow continue to manage to meet family needs." The strategies, she concludes, "turn women into managers of poverty, while dispossessing them of any power" (Bélanger, 1990).[21]

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[20] For a review of the literature in this field, see Charles, 1990, pp. 19–25.

Some feminist research on women's reproductive labour in families has gradually shifted its focus to their reproductive labour in communities, neighbourhoods and villages – work performed, whether paid or not, mainly to sustain the social fabric.

However, the reason that feminist research was slow to focus on this aspect of women's reproductive labour in communities was not because their work did not previously exist. Women work in communities, organize to meet the practical needs of people, to achieve immediate solutions, and have been doing so for ages; but this type of work and activism has always meshed poorly with the feminist movement. It was analyzed more in terms of the theory of social movements (Naples, 1998) and tended not to consider the significance of the massive representation of women – except perhaps, as Jeanne Bissiliat has commented, by simply "mentioning it casually as if it was of hardly any importance, as if it had no significance" (Bissiliat, 1997, p. 91). In other words, the gender aspect of social movements remained largely unexamined.[22]

The age-old work of women in the organization of communities, and the empowerment it involved and gave to women was, until very recently, virtually ignored by feminist historians (Berger-Gluck, 1998, p. 33). Evidently, this was because the empowerment was not generally accompanied by an explicit re-examination of the traditional division of labour and women's subordination to men.[23]

The historian Temma Kaplan (1982, 1987) had shown that "feminist awareness" was not the only type of awareness that had provided the impetus for action by women in history. Kaplan highlighted the fact that, historically, public action by women had often been motivated by what she called "female consciousness." By this she was referring to the awareness which, on the basis of women's assignment to the reproductive labour in families (preserving, feeding, caregiving, protecting life), prompted women to struggle to preserve, feed, care for and protect their entire communities. Other studies taking the same direction have subsequently supported the hypothesis of Kaplan (e.g., Molyneux, 1985, and Corcoran-Nantes, 1993). It is a highly interesting hypothesis since it raises the entire question of women's awareness of "gender," which may have provided the impulse for their action outside the private sphere.

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[21] On this topic, see also Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa, 1995, 1997, and Federici, 1997.

[22] On this topic in France, see "Hommes et femmes dans le mouvement social," *Cahiers du GEDISST*, No. 18, (1996.) Paris: Harmattan. Studies on the same topic in Quebec include those by Senécal, Tardy and Legault, 1985, Dumais and Côté, 1989, and Côté, 1995.

[23] See a debate between U.S. historians on the question of defining feminism in history: "Politics and Culture in Women's History: A Symposium," *Feminist Studies*, No. 6 (Spring 1980).

In the past few years, the classical definition of feminism has been re-examined and considerably expanded, particularly under the influence of women who are not Western, white and middle-class – in other words, women of colour in northern countries and post-colonial nations, as well as lesbians or women in post-communist countries. Increasingly, the frontiers of feminism are expanding and so is its traditional definition. In this regard, the term used by some to describe women's activism in communities – "popular feminism" (Molyneux, 1985) – would contribute as well to the expansion of the traditional definition. Women's empowerment, which lies at the heart of this type of feminist activism, would genuinely raise the issue of the subordinate role of women in society, thus representing genuine feminism.

Among feminist studies dealing with the relationship between women and community development,[24] one type focuses on making visible and describing women's actions.

With regard to Quebec, these studies include analyses of Quebec women's groups (of which we shall give an account in the following section); research by the authors of the book *Du local au planétaire* (Côté et al., 1995), which analyzes political activism of regional women's groups as "agents of regional development"; and research by the authors of *Vers un développement rose* (Anadon et al., 1990), who analyze these actions as "self-development practices." Also notable are the works of Marie-Lise Semblat in France; she describes these practices as "territorial feminism" (Semblat, 1996).

The starting point for these studies is the observation that women and the groups they establish in regional communities are far from being passive social players. Women are subjects, actors "in the development processes taking place at the local or regional level" (Masson and Tremblay, 1993). The studies reinterpret the practices of organizations in the women's movement as genuine development practices, which previously had not been recognized as such.

The studies are consistent with the vision sketched out by activists some years earlier – for example, in an article by Michèle Asselin, Suzanne Bélanger and Nancy Guberman, which identified women's centres as "agents of change" (Asselin et al., 1984; Guberman, 1987) and "economic construction sites" (l'R des Centres de femmes du Québec, 1993).

Also important to mention in this category are studies that analyze movements such as "cuisines collectives" and production workshops, in Quebec and South America (Fournier, Provost and Goudreault, 1998; Guay, 1997b).

Other studies (notably those by Jeanne Bissiliat on women's roles in popular movements in Brazil) reach similar conclusions: women involved in grass-roots movements are "real players in implementation of social policy" (Bissiliat, 1997, p. 109).

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[24] Here we are not offering a review of the literature from the huge field of research on women and development (see instead Lafontaine, 1995). We provide only an overview of the literature on the issue of valuing women's work in communities, which brings us to the theme of the social impact of this work.

Alongside studies that enhance the visibility of women's contributions to community development and attempt to describe those contributions, another category of studies seeks the meaning of those contributions from the viewpoint of gender relations. These include studies by Maxine Molyneux in Nicaragua (1985), Danièle Kergoat in France on nurses' coalitions (quoted in Bissiliat, 1997), Nancy Naples in the United States (1998), Denyse Côté in Quebec (1993), Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes in Brazil (1993) and Marie-Josée Nadal in Mexico (1998).

However, the Quebec studies that most closely adhere to our research theme are those that analyze the social impact, or social contribution, of the work of women's groups in communities. This trend casts considerable light on "social profitability" and consists almost entirely of studies produced by women's groups themselves.

b) Studies on the social impact of the work of women's groups in community social infrastructure

This body of research may be described as "grey literature," the documents having been produced by the groups and circulated internally.[25] A review of this literature shows that women's groups do not seem to have conducted formal studies on the social impacts of their activities,[26] apart from program impact assessments performed by some community groups,[27] or else attempts to "measure the degree of 'alternativeness' of [certain] activities."[28] In the latter case the analyses were more in the nature of internal assessments of activities and so were excluded from the literature examined, which dealt with the broader social impact, the social "contribution" of activities.

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[25] This literature has been analyzed by Nadine Goudreault, a member of our research team, working mainly from documents deposited at the Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine (CDEACF), and with a request to the "Groupe des 13" to supply documents on the topic. We were thus able to contact the following groups: the Association des collaboratrices et partenaires en affaires (ACPA), the Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale (AFEAS), the Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail (CIAFT), the Fédération des associations de familles monoparentales et recomposées du Québec (FAFMRQ), the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ), the Fédération des ressources d'hébergement pour femmes violentées et en difficulté du Québec (FRHFVDQ), the Fédération du Québec pour le planning des naissances (FQPN), Femmes regroupées en option non-traditionnelles (FRONT), l'R des Centres de femmes du Québec, Nouveau Départ national inc., the Regroupement Naissance-Renaissance, the Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale, the Regroupement québécois des CALACs, the Réseau des lesbiennes du Québec (RLQ), and the Réseau québécois d'action pour la santé des femmes. Given that assembling this bibliography depended on the willingness of groups contacted to respond to our request, we cannot claim that our review of the literature is exhaustive.

[26] It should be noted that the economic impact of such groups' activities has been studied more than their social impact. When the question of social impact arises in these studies, it is almost always to note that research should be undertaken in this regard. See, for example, Mathieu, *et al.*, 1996; Mouvement populaire et communautaire 04, 1993; and Moreau, 1998.

[27] See, for example, COMSEP, 1998.

[28] For example, the Regroupement des ressources alternatives en santé mentale du Québec, 1995.

Based on the influence of groups in various fields, we have categorized the social effects or impacts of their activities as identified in the literature issued by those same groups. The major fields of influence of women's and community groups may be described as follows:

1. on tracking little-known social problems, on policy change and changes in institutional practice;
2. on improvement of economic conditions of individuals and regions;
3. on establishing inclusiveness and mutual help networks, or on reintegrating people excluded from the community;
4. on personal growth (training in knowledge, know-how, life skills, development of critical thought);
5. on development of collective empowerment;
6. on changing attitudes, eliminating prejudices, consciousness-raising among women, etc.;
7. on accessibility of services (services for persons never previously reached, accessibility of previously non-existent services); and
8. on the influence of group activities with regard to social innovation and creation of alternative services.

The effort by women's groups to categorize the social impacts or consequences of their activities has thus consisted mainly of identifying the effects of their activities based on various statistics showing numbers served, the testimony of participants, members or volunteers, and the views of the groups' permanent staff, grounded on follow-up with people who have benefited from the services offered.

Naming and illustrating the effects of activities – this seems to be the point reached by women's groups in identifying social contribution indicators. This, at least, is what we conclude from the documents they produce. The social contribution or impact of a group's activities does not appear to have been more accurately measured.

In light of what is revealed in this overview of the literature – that intersect with the social profitability of women's work in community social infrastructure or the "value" of that work – we now come to the theoretical approach chosen for this study. The task here is to state the feminist rationale for performing the research.

E. Theoretical approach and hypothesis

In pursuing our research question, what aspect of feminist analysis will help us better understand the undervaluing of women's work in communities and the non-recognition of their contribution to the economy?

Our research question is as follows: in the current situation, how can the social economy activities of women[29] in women's groups and mixed-gender community groups be defended, supported and financed with regard to their social "profitability"?

How should we regard the contribution of women to the support and development of communities, and to revitalizing their social fabric, so that we may succeed in "measuring" that contribution by indicators other than financial ones? What theoretical reasoning would be most relevant to pursue in this connection?

To answer this question as expected – that is, to state our hypothesis – we started by doing what the authors of *Vers un développement rose* had done in studying the contribution of women's groups in the development of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean: we asked ourselves whether the undervaluing of the social "profitability" of women's activities in women's groups or community groups might not be due to the fact that when researchers employ

> . . . only the customary economic indicators, there is no point in dwelling on the place of women in development [in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region]. Until now, no researcher has bothered to do so. Is the stress put on "economic performance" perhaps a factor contributing to the current void in research on the relationship of women to regional development? (Masson et al., 1989, p. 69)

The undervaluing of the social profitability of the work of women in the social economy (whether in women's or mixed-gender community groups) certainly has much to do with the fact that the customary economic indicators render women's work in community development invisible.

But there is more: aside from the fact that the capitalist economy makes invisible any form of "wealth" that is not converted or convertible into dollars, this process of making certain activities invisible is gender-related. By this we mean it has much to do with the fact that *women* are the ones who engage primarily in these activities (100 per cent in women's groups and 80 per cent in mixed-gender community groups) (Dumais and Côté, 1989). The massive participation of women must be taken into consideration, not merely mentioned in passing.

The process of making their work invisible is also linked to the fact that the nature of this work has to do, more or less, with the concept of "extended mothering,"[30] or caring, in the public sphere; it relates to the historically unpaid contribution of women to the support of families and communities, and to social reproduction in general.

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[29] In this study, the expression "the social economy activities of women" is always used in the primary sense, like the social infrastructure demand. On this subject, see the following subsection on methodology, particularly point F.1 on definitions.

[30] This concept was developed by Ginette Boyer and Lucie Bélanger in their thesis (Bélanger and Boyer, 1989): they speak of "**mothering** when it is a matter of performing responsibilities to children (procreation and childbearing, material and emotional care for children, educating children, all the household tasks related to this work) . . . and **extended mothering** when it is a matter of caring for dependants: spouse, disabled children, elderly relatives, sick adults, formal volunteering (in organizations and institutions) and informal volunteering (helping neighbours or friends)."

Is this not a type of work performed overwhelmingly by women, without payment, at home in the family environment, in total invisibility – an invisibility that is itself due to the fact that these tasks were part of the supposed very "nature" of women, or their "vocation"? This assigning of a fixed nature to women and the invisibility of their work are consequences of their "appropriation" or domination (Guillaumin, 1992).[31]

One part of the theory of the appropriation of women, which was developed by Colette Guillaumin, highlights the fact that the gender-based division of labour displays this specific feature: women are overwhelmingly assigned to "providing bodily, material and (potentially) emotional support to the entire range of social players" (Guillaumin, 1992, p. 28). This is one of the "particular expressions of the relationship of appropriation" (Guillaumin, 1992, pp. 19–20), characteristic of relations of "sexage."[32]

This theory was developed and expanded in Quebec by feminist materialist researchers (Juteau-Lee, 1983; Chamberland, 1996; Roy, 1996) and primarily by Nicole Laurin and Danielle Juteau in their studies on members of women's religious orders (Juteau and Laurin, 1988, 1997).

In particular, Juteau and Laurin demonstrate that the public and private appropriation of women also operates outside spheres traditionally identified as public or private – that is, the family and the labour market:

> Rather than being confined within relatively separate categories, women now shift from one sphere to another, thus moving from one form of gender-based division [of labour] to another, in the Church, the labour market, the home or in volunteer work (Juteau and Laurin, 1997, p. 152).

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[31] For Christine Delphy, this type of work has to do with a particular mode of production, the mode of domestic production – see Dupont (Delphy), 1970: the oppression of women is based on their exploitation within this mode of production, within the family. For an overview of various interpretations of household work and different descriptions of capitalism/patriarchalism in feminist analysis, see Juteau and Laurin, 1988. They also explain how the approach of Colette Guillaumin seemed to them heuristic, particularly with regard to understanding the situation of categories of women who escape from patriarchal exploitation within the family: women members of religious orders, and unmarried, divorced or separated women.

[32] Nicole Laurin and Danielle Juteau studied the work of religious women in Quebec in light of this theory of appropriation. They state, "Women are assigned to supporting human beings and to the associated household work; as mothers/spouses, volunteers or religious, they all perform this work for free. When it is paid, it is mostly women who perform it; when women are paid, their job is mostly to do this work" (Juteau and Laurin, 1997, p. 138).

From this viewpoint, "The gender-based division of labour is found throughout society and . . . must be grasped differently depending on the institutional setting in which it operates" (Juteau and Laurin, 1997, p. 145).[33]

Nicole Laurin and Danielle Juteau have thus further extended Guillaumin's analysis of women's appropriation. In particular, they have analyzed the diversity of modes, settings and forms of appropriation of women, both private and public (Juteau and Laurin, 1988). They have also highlighted the new diversification of activities and models of private appropriation, as well as the development of public appropriation; in this regard, they maintain that what is taking place is a "reorganization of our appropriation," even a new system of sexage.

Some of the forms of reorganization mentioned are directly related to our research concerns. In the new system of sexage "now being established," all women are said to be bound "to exercise spiritual motherhood to humanity in general and to their immediate circle in particular: the family, the neighbourhood, the environment, etc." (Juteau and Laurin, 1988, p. 102). As an example, they mention the field of social assistance, where the dismantling of the welfare state has led to

> . . . transfer to the family, and to what is called the social environment, some of the elderly, sick, disabled, etc. . . . In general, the weak, the disadvantaged and dependent persons remain, as they have always been, the responsibility of women – and now of all women regardless of their marital status, profession or vocation (Juteau and Laurin, 1988, p. 202).

Lucie Bélanger and Danielle Fournier had previously formulated a hypothesis to this effect: given the current dismantling of the welfare state and its social policies, is not the use of women as "natural caregivers" (that is, as volunteers or as undeclared or low-paid workers) one of the new forms, or modern mechanisms, of the appropriation of the domestic production of women? (Bélanger and Fournier, 1997, p. 150).

Following on Laurin's and Juteau's extensions of the analysis of the appropriation of women, and the hypothesis formulated by Bélanger and Fournier, we in turn raise the following question: given the current worldwide restructuring of capitalism, is not the use of women as instruments for restoring the social fabric of the community, and the use of their *free, undeclared or low-paid* work another form of the appropriation of women? This question deserves to be explored further, made clearer and "operationalized."

The use of women's free or low-paid work in this field is not, however, a recent phenomenon. Women have long played the role of "safety valves for social tensions" (Dalla Costa and James, 1973). It is mainly in times of disaster or national emergency (e.g., war, population displacement or environmental accident) that the mobilization of human resources makes visible women's work in the communities affected.[34]

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[33] On volunteer work in hospitals during the first half of the 20th century in Quebec, see the viewpoint developed by Aline Charles, 1990 and her interpretation of volunteer work by women.

Our research focuses more specifically on *production* that must be recognized. We have chosen a materialist approach, that is one that seeks to understand and explain the situation of women on the basis of their material circumstances – notably, women's activities and *work* – and not on the basis of some "vocation" or "nature" said to be special to them. The work performed by women under the gender-based division of labour is a *social*, not a *natural*, fact. It must be analyzed in social terms.

Our research hypothesis is based on the following postulate: given their age-old assignment to work in the family, the vast majority of women, voluntarily or not,[35] have first produced and then supported, cared for, educated and socialized[36] human beings throughout history. Women have socialized them to become *citizens*. Thus, given their historical role in the production and reproduction of human beings, "willingly or unwillingly, over the centuries women have become experts in planning, organizing and performing activities offering an immediate and expected response to the different human, social and cultural needs of their families and communities" (Belleau, 1997a, p. 3).

Apart from producing life, women have become producers of quality of life, health, education, culture – in short, producers of socialization and citizenship, sources of *social* productivity. As sources of social productivity, they are also sources of social profitability and ultimately of social wealth.

The research hypothesis that will guide us is as follows:

> Women's activities, in women's groups or mixed-gender community groups[37] working in the social infrastructure, can be defended, supported and financed on the basis of the fact that, by their work, women are producers of quality of life, health, education, culture, in short producers of socialization and citizenship, sources of social productivity. Their work is essentially civic work. As a source of social productivity, their work is also a source of social profitability and ultimately of social wealth.

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[34] What comes to mind in this connection is the mobilization of housewives and women volunteers in Quebec during the Second World War (Auger and Lamothe, 1981) or, more recently, during the ice storm of January 1998.

[35] On the issue of women's awareness, see Mathieu, 1991.

[36] On socialization as a work process, see Juteau-Lee, 1983, pp. 48–49: "It is in the context of a relationship of material support that culture is transmitted and socialization takes place. This . . . is a material and ideal activity that, despite its poetry, exhausts mothers while another human being is taking form, an activity that requires their complete involvement and that is performed without pay by housewives . . . while their spouses go off to work."

[37] Women participate heavily in community activities, representing 100 per cent of members of women's groups and 75 to 80 per cent (Dumais and Côté, 1989) of mixed-gender community groups. One third of the sample of women participants in our focus groups were drawn from women working in mixed-gender community groups primarily serving women.

Support for this research hypothesis comes first from earlier feminist analyses. Indeed, our hypothesis is consistent with the wages for housework trend, which laid the theoretical foundations for recognition of women's reproductive labour. It draws support as well from the theoretical contributions of women activists, especially those who formulated the definition of "social infrastructure," which was one of the nine demands of the June 1995 Women's March.[38] It draws as well on sources in the movement of feminist economists who seek to expose the entire "invisible," unpaid sector of the economy and to broaden the concepts of economy and work to cover not only monetary exchanges but the entire range of contributions to public wealth.[39]

We believe it appropriate to refer to the theoretical work done by feminists who have contributed to a feminist analysis of work, particularly those who have cast light on the other side of the economy, the hidden aspect of economic wealth, and the fact that women produce this wealth.

We are thinking here of the studies that first "discovered the home beside the factory,"[40] that is, the wages for housework trend, whose contribution we mentioned in our review of the literature on valuing women's reproductive labour in families. We are indebted to this movement for examining the role of women not only in families but also in communities, especially in preserving the communal social fabric: "The social fabric . . . is itself an integral part of the capitalist mode of production" (Dalla Costa, 1973, p. 10); it is "the other factory." This is why it is called the "social factory," the key to which is women's work in the family and the community. In these two spheres, women perform highly *productive* work: they are sources of productivity, of social surplus-value, of social productivity.

The "social factory" was a matter for discussion in 1973; today, other researchers speak in terms of "social capital" (Bélanger, 1997; Bélanger and Sullivan, 1998)[41] or of "human capital" (Cloud and Garrett, 1996; Picchio, 1995). What was called "the other factory" is today called "the other economy," the "other form of wealth" (Guay, 1997a) or "primordial wealth" – that is, "the Earth; people; the accumulated knowledge, experience and work of earlier humans; natural resources" (Labrie, 1999, p. 84). In this connection, researchers speak of "soft domestic product," differentiating it from gross domestic product; this would include

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[38] Women's March Against Poverty, 1995; Belleau, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1997d. See also Bélanger and Boyer, 1989, 1990, and Bélanger and Fournier, 1997.

[39] See Waring, 1988, Picchio, 1992, and the periodical *Feminist Economics*, as well as Moisan, 1998.

[40] Of the many theoreticians of wages for housework, we mention Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Selma James and Silvia Federici. Aside from the 1973 masterwork by Dalla Costa and James, *Le pouvoir des femmes et la subversion sociale*, readers may consult Modern Times Collective, 1975, or (in French) a 1977 anthology of texts by these activist-theoreticians, issued by Collectif l'Insoumise. For more recent development of this line of thought, see Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa, ed., 1995, 1997, as well as Federici, 1997.

[41] See also Maureen Hart, 1996 for a different definition: "Social capital has to do with the people in a society. There are two parts to social capital: the skills, education, health and natural abilities of the people in the community, and the connections between people in a community, the relationships of families, friends, neighbourhoods and their ability to co-operate and work together."

"all contributions to collective wealth that are not converted into dollars and are not recorded in GDP" (CAPMO, 1998, p. 85).

Our study of the activities of women's groups in communities, with regard to their social contribution, thus falls within the feminist perspective of the social economy, until now little explored, and to which this study seeks to contribute as far as it can. It is also undertaken in accordance with the other approach to the economy, one that considers the existence of social and collective wealth alongside narrowly economic wealth – in particular, wealth consisting of quality of life, health, education, culture, environment and citizenship, and to which "feminist theoretical approaches should be developed to offer an alternative" (Sabourin, 1998).

F. Methodology

Let us first examine the definitions we shall use throughout this study.

1. Some definitions

In this study, social economy refers to the concept of "social infrastructure" used by the Women's March, or to "resources put in place by communities to enhance quality of life," as specified at the beginning of this document – in other words, "activities focusing on the human and social development of individuals and communities."

"The activities of women in women's or mixed-gender groups" thus include work customarily performed in a community setting by volunteers, activists and/or paid employees of such groups and, more specifically, "non-profit social and community resources and initiatives that 'produce' quality of life and well-being for individuals and communities, and that should not need an economic objective or financial yield to receive public or private funding" (Belleau, 1997d, p. 4).

As for the concept of "social profitability," we shall borrow the definition adopted by the Chantier de l'économie sociale:

> This profitability is valued in terms of contribution to democratic development, support for active citizenship, and promotion of values and initiatives for empowering individuals and communities. Social profitability thus helps enhance the quality of life and well-being of the population, particularly through availability of a wider range of services (Neamtan, ed., 1996, p. 6).

The concept of "social productivity" used in this text is based on that of Mariarosa Dalla Costa.[42] We thus use it in the sense of social surplus-value, of social profit.

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[42] In *Le pouvoir des femmes et la subversion sociale*, Dalla Costa describes household work as "productive work in the Marxist sense of the term, that is work that produces surplus-value." By their work, women are in this context "sources of social productivity, that is, sources of surplus-value making, firstly within the family" (Dalla Costa and James, 1973, pp. 64–65).

2. Research process

Our research objective was to propose indicators of social profitability while still supporting a feminist approach to the social economy and to development. Accordingly, we undertook a review of studies related to valuing women's work. We then chose to begin our research by examining the view of this issue held by activist-practitioners since, as far as we know, very little research has thus far been devoted to the issue.[43]

With a focus-group type of field survey, we thought it useful to review current perceptions of the issue by activists from Quebec women's groups involved in defending the social profitability of the activities of women's groups in the social economy. We wished to learn how these activists expressed the social "productivity" of women's work in the social economy and, finally, how they interpreted social "profitability."

Aside from informing us of current thinking on the issue among social economy activists in different Quebec regions, the survey findings helped us determine the types of tools needed by activists to measure the social profitability of their activities. These were mainly qualitative measurement tools.

The need for qualitative indicators led us to approach specialists in qualitative measurement. Finally, after several more or less useful trials, we took the community indicators trend and its literature as a proper point of departure. From these we developed a set of indicators of the contribution of women's and mixed-gender community groups to the quality of life and social fabric of the community.

Accordingly, a preliminary draft set of indicators was prepared largely on the basis of a review of this literature. The set was then improved and submitted for preliminary validation by two different groups. This set of indicators appears at the end of the present study. It is important to note that this is a draft set of *desired* indicators; in other words, they have not yet been measured in any way.

Given the innovative nature of this study, further validations will be required, particularly by other groups throughout Quebec. Lastly, there will be the necessary shift from "desired indicators" to "measured indicators."

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[43] The study by Côté et al., 1998, conducted in partnership with the Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale under the aegis of the Policy Research Fund of Status of Women Canada, deals (as its title indicates) with the impacts on Quebec women of the shift to ambulatory care and social economy measures. In the part of that study devoted to the social economy, five women workers sitting on Comités régionaux d'économie sociale and two directors of provincial women's associations were interviewed during the first half of 1997, a time when the mechanisms for setting up social economy projects were being put in place. This research does not specifically address the issue of social profitability but in many respects it complements our study, as it considers the definition of social economy and the nature, mandate and activities of CRES. It also considers selection processes for projects submitted to CRES, links between the social economy and the shift to ambulatory care, and social economy issues for women.

3. Focus groups[44]

As we were engaged mainly in an exploratory research activity with the ultimate goal of establishing a line of argument, we had to use a method of information collection that allowed researchers and interviewees together to explore this line of argument, or at least ways of developing it. Since this was an inductive research process, the focus group method seemed to us suitable in this case.

a) Participation criteria

The focus group participants were chosen from the pool of women members or past members of advisory/policy committees on the social economy in Quebec, particularly women's movement delegates to the 15 Comités régionaux d'économie sociale (CRES) during their first phase of existence (roughly, from late 1995 to September 1997). At that time the committees consisted solely of women's group delegates and government officials.

As stated above, the CRES are regional advisory bodies established following the Women's March and creation of the Comité d'orientation et de concertation sur l'économie sociale; in 1996, COCES published the report *Entre l'espoir et le doute*. The CRES were to supervise the launch of the social economy approach in Quebec by promoting and evaluating social economy projects. Sixteen CRES were formed starting in the fall of 1995. *Entre l'espoir et le doute* appeared in May 1996 and recommended that the CRES be strengthened.

In the first year, the CRES were to consist of four representatives of women's groups appointed by the regional coalition of women's groups, plus six Quebec government officials from the region's Conseil du statut de la femme (CSF), the regional branch of Travail-Québec, the Régie régionale de la Santé et des services sociaux, the Société régionale de développement de la main-d'œuvre, and the Conseil régional de développement. The Secrétariat au développement des régions did the coordination work.

Some of the CRES committees had agreed to expand their membership to include representatives from community groups. We supported these regional decisions, particularly since they met one of our sampling criteria: first encouraging the participation of women's groups but *also* that of mixed-gender community groups serving women (giving the latter groups one-third representation). One of our focus groups, for example, was set up with members from a single mixed-gender community group whose economic, social and job-related activities mainly served women.[45]

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[44] For the methodology used at this stage of our research, we referred in particular to a new series of *Focus Group Kit* volumes by Richard A. Krueger, especially Volumes 3 (*Developing Questions for Focus Groups*), 4 (*Moderating Focus Groups*) and 6 (*Analysing & Reporting Focus Group Results*). See Krueger, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c.

We drew as well on other sources, notably Geoffrion, 1997; Krueger, 1988; Merton, 1990; Meyer and Ouellet, 1997; Morgan, 1988; Mucchielli, 1980; and Simard, 1989, 1994.

[45] Aside from this sampling criterion, the group was chosen because it combined two features:

Finally, some of our focus groups also included delegates to CRES of the "second generation," which began in September 1997 with the expansion of CRES to include community, union and co-operative representatives.[46] All of these people were and/or are closely involved in consultation on, and analysis of, the various social economy projects submitted by the various social groups. They are thus closely involved as well in defending the social profitability of the social economy projects of women's groups, and mixed community and volunteer groups.

In all, we organized eight focus groups during May and June 1998.[47] The sessions lasted three hours, with between four and eight participants per session. In total, there were 44 participants (three of them men) representing 35 women's groups and mixed-gender community groups: 29 delegates from 25 women's groups or associations,[48] and 15 delegates from 10 mixed-gender community groups (including two regional representatives from trade union federations) throughout Quebec. Seven regions were thus represented,[49] with the choice being guided by the selection criteria determined by our advisory committee. The eight focus groups were supposed to consider the following four regional parameters:

- the urban/semi-urban/rural factor;
- the remote region factor;
- the diversity of regional economic problems; and
- changes in social economy structures.

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a) It consisted of members or past members of first- or second-generation CRES (which gave it a similar membership to that of other focus groups), as well as members of other advisory/policy committees on the social economy in Quebec.
b) Through specific research, the group had developed measures for evaluating the social impact of its activities.

[46] We accepted the expansion of our focus groups since in certain regions it was no longer possible to locate or obtain the participation of enough group delegates to "first-generation" CRES. Overall, the choice had positive outcomes since we were thereby able to find interesting parallels in the development of the concept of social profitability between the two "generations" of CRES from September 1996 to the present – as we shall note in a later section of this study entitled "Social profitability: origin, definition, criteria."

[47] Nadine Goudreault coordinated the organizing and chairing of the eight focus groups. With some exceptions, the composition of each focus group was determined by representatives of the regional roundtable of women's groups, as well as by members of the advisory committee for this study. Nadine Goudreault and Lucie Bélanger of Relais-femmes transcribed the interviews.

[48] In calculating the number of women's groups, we have excluded the Conseil du statut de la femme, from which four regional officials participated in four of our focus groups. Their participation was the result of a decision by some chairs of regional roundtables of women's groups. As noted earlier, those persons were given responsibility for determining the make-up of the regional focus groups. In these cases, the four CSF officials were deemed to be "allies" of the women's movement within their respective CRES. We accepted these decisions despite their methodological debatability; but obviously we have excluded the CSF from the final calculation of the number of women's groups that participated in our focus groups.

[49] The list of organizations represented in the focus groups appears in Appendix 1, along with the breakdown of their representation.

In every case, people were very enthusiastic about participating in our focus groups. The urgent need for such research was thus confirmed and expectations were very high.

b) Questions and analysis of findings[50]

Questions were arranged from the general to the particular; that is, they led participants from discussing the concept of social profitability to specifying its indicators, while noting its tangible and intangible signs (social impacts observed in practice). See our Discussion Guide in Appendix 2.

Discussions were taped and transcribed in their entirety.

Our questions directed the analysis toward three major themes. Comments were organized and analyzed according to these themes, using a coding system that ensured the comments would remain confidential.[51] The themes were:

1. social profitability (emergence, definition and defence of the concept);
2. social effects and their measurement (illustration by field examples of aspects of social profitability, and specification of indicators of that profitability); and
3. the more general issue of barriers (other than the excuse of financial non-profitability) to genuine recognition of social profitability.

4. Groups validating the set of indicators

The findings of our focus groups and, more specifically, the discussions on the lack of qualitative tools for measuring their social contribution led us to conduct research on qualitative indicators, indicators of "social progress," indicators of "social utility" and indicators of the contribution to increasing this social utility.

Through a review of the literature on social and community indicators, as well as consultations with researchers and activists on the subject, we were able to develop a preliminary draft set of indicators of "social contribution." A very preliminary validation of the set of indicators was then conducted. The indicators were submitted for examination by two different groups.

The first group consisted of five permanent employees and two members of the board of directors of the same regional women's centre, which offered particularly diversified resources and services in the region. This allowed us to check the usefulness of a good many of our categories of indicators.

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[50] We drew on Volume 6 of the *Focus Group Kit* for the method to analyze findings. See Krueger, 1998c.

[51] For reasons of confidentiality, we assigned a number to each focus group, from 1 to 8 (FG1 to FG8). Statements we refer to or quote have also been indicated by number corresponding to the page of the transcription of each group's discussion. In the analysis of findings, for example, FG2-18 indicates that statements quoted or referred to are found on page 18 of the transcript of discussions of Focus Group 2.

The second group had a broader make-up, both in terms of geography and mission pursued. Originally, it was to consist of six representatives from different regions and different women's groups, each involved in specific regional activities covering several aspects of our major categories of indicators: a women's shelter, an organization helping women find and integrate into jobs, a group combating violence against women, a group defending welfare recipients, a social economy and employment group, and an advocacy group.

Selected from the participants in our focus groups the previous spring (and thus from those very people who had told us the type of indicators they particularly needed in defending the social profitability of their groups), these representatives were to add to our categories of indicators. However, only three people were able to travel on the actual day of our consultation. They represented groups acting in the fields of advocacy (for persons with disabilities), women's employment access and integration, and sectors covered by a semi-urban women's centre.

Two one-day working sessions were organized: one with members of the regional women's centre, and the other with the group having broader participation. Following a preliminary phase in which the indicators were explained, the work consisted mainly of submitting our set of indicators for examination (general assessment, what's wrong, what must be clarified, changed or added). The preliminary explanation stage is described, in the letter of invitation (see Appendix 3) sent to participants two weeks before the date of the session. Appendix 4 contains the planned schedule for the day's working session with the regional women's centre. The written minutes of these sessions served as raw material for recasting our set of indicators.[52] The set of indicators appears in Section IV of our study.

If readers refer to the method of developing community indicators proposed by Redefining Progress,[53] they will see that we have followed only some of the steps mentioned in developing a set of community indicators, at least in the tradition represented by the community indicators trend. The steps are:

1. review of existing models of indicators;
2. development of a proposed preliminary set of indicators; and
3. preliminary validation of the set of indicators.

At the conclusion of the study, a remaining further step is that of finalizing the set of indicators. Described in the Redefining Progress method, it consists of convening "a participatory selection and validation process" (p. 17). Since the development of community indicators is a process that by nature requires broad participation, plans must therefore be made for broad consultation with concerned individuals. According to specialists in the field, the success of the entire operation depends on holding such consultations.

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[52] The minutes of the meetings were recorded by Nadine Goudreault and Lucie Bélanger. Leading the discussions were Lucie Bélanger for the group with broader participation and Josée Belleau for the regional women's centre.

[53] We shall return to this methodology for developing community indicators in Section III.B of this report. See Redefining Progress et al., 1997.

The very last step involves transforming the *desired* indicators (which is essentially what our existing indicators are) into indicators that are in some way measurable.

Let us now examine how the issues of the "value" of women's work, and "social profitability," are viewed by the women engaged in defending the social profitability of the activities of women's groups in the social economy of Quebec – that is, representatives of women's groups on the Comités régionaux d'économie sociale during the first phase of their existence (1995–98).

We will begin by examining the view held by practitioners involved in this issue, women working in the social infrastructure.

II. SOCIAL PROFITABILITY OF THE WORK OF WOMEN'S GROUPS IN COMMUNITIES, AS SEEN BY WORKERS IN "SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE"

What is the current thinking of women working in the social economy in various regions of Quebec on social profitability and its measurement? Before considering that question we should ask a number of other ones: How did the concept of social profitability emerge in Quebec? What are the barriers to recognition of the social profitability of women's work in the social infrastructure of communities? How do these same women identify the social productivity of women's work in the social economy? How do they convert it into social "profitability"? Have indicators been found, or suggestions for indicators of social impact, benefits or social effects of such activities? These are the questions raised in our analysis of findings from the eight focus groups we organized in seven Quebec regions in the spring of 1998.

A. Social profitability: origin, definition, criteria

Social profitability? "We didn't even use that expression!" exclaimed one participant in our focus groups. When did this concept find its place in socio-political discussion in Quebec?

According to one group, the concept of profitability, applied to activities of social significance, emerged before the CRES were established. More specifically, it made its appearance at the same time as the issue of deficit reduction appeared on the political scene. The race toward a zero deficit led people to question social activism projects as follows: "It costs a lot! Is it really profitable?" (FG6-8).[54]

According to the same group, the Women's March, with its social infrastructure demand, answered this question in essence as follows: "Yes, it is profitable. It is profitable socially and economically. And that marked the arrival of the social economy. The response . . . was the social economy" (FG6-8).

In answer to the same question, three other groups (FG1, FG4 and FG7) gave a similar analysis. The concept of social profitability was introduced immediately after the Women's March. It emerged following the Quebec government's response to the social infrastructure demand, after the shift from the concept of social infrastructure to that of social economy, understood in the sense of "collective entrepreneurship":

> I think the mistake was to have fallen into it, into the trap of profitability, and now we are stuck with a definition imposed on us by the government throughout Quebec; now we must come under this concept and, in my opinion, community groups no longer

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[54] As noted earlier, the reference in parentheses shows that the statement quoted is taken from a focus group – in this case, what we have labelled focus group 6 (FG6). The statement appears on p. 8 of the transcription of this group's discussions: hence FG6-8. This form of reference is used to safeguard the confidentiality of the discussions and of the persons quoted.

> have a place in the scheme of things. . . . They are talking about a different sector; it may be called the social economy, but they are speaking of something completely different. To me it seems that people no longer talk about social infrastructure, they no longer talk about community groups (FG4-13).

While it was generally accepted that social profitability denoted "all the social impacts produced by a project" (FG8-8), the concept had always been implicit in all the activities of the groups and had never been identified. "Social utility" might have been discussed, but never "social profitability." The latter term seems to have come into use by activists at a time when the entire field of social action was being scrutinized for economic and financial profitability. It had to be adopted to defend the very existence of activities that would never generate any monetary profit; the idea that they generated a *social* profit had to be defended.

This defence was undertaken "from the beginning" – that is, from the creation of the Comité d'orientation et de concertation sur l'économie sociale, which was to produce the document *Entre l'espoir et le doute*, presenting several conflicting interpretations of the concept of profitability: "From the beginning, the trend was that these terms were in conflict, clashing" (FG1-5).

For another group (FG2), the clash between economic and social profitability started with the establishment of their region's CRES, when (with government officials sitting around the table) criteria were developed for selecting submitted projects.

The dispute with officials began when a definition for social profitability was sought:

> We had a lot of difficulty defining the concept of social economy; it was not a well-known concept, . . . they were not familiar with . . . we, not so much but . . . because we had demanded social infrastructure, we were ahead of them.[55] They still tried, throughout all the negotiations we had with them, to define social economy in terms of the concept of the market economy. And that is why we ended up saying that there must be social profitability and [then] we began talking about the scope of social projects, what they provided in terms of services, in terms of defending rights. (FG2-4)

The vast majority of our focus groups, however, agreed that during the first phase of existence of the CRES (the "first generation"), in which in every case[56] representatives of women's groups sat around the table with government officials – in other words, before the committees were expanded to include other "partners" – a "broad definition of social economy" (FG1-6) was widely accepted. By that we mean a definition that was consistent with the social infrastructure demand of the Women's March.

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[55] "I should say that we made extensive use of the document, which was our bible, as I called it at the time . . . *Entre l'espoir et le doute*. It was our reference tool," added the same participant (FG2-2). See COCES, 1996.

[56] From the beginning, some CRES decided to broaden participation to include community groups.

A majority of groups felt the issue of social profitability had not been discussed. It seemed to have been a "given" (FG4-3). Participants spoke of the balance of power in its favour (FG1): "We were by ourselves"; "We were leaders in that area"; "We had the power" (FG5-4). The government officials, at least in this region, "also accepted the definitions we put forward because, if you look at the framework for action adopted for the CRES, it contained the chief values that were in *Entre l'espoir et le doute*" (FG5-4).

This was an ongoing theme in the comments of a majority of groups: the concept of social profitability was among the social economy characteristics developed in the terms of reference adopted by many groups. Thus we find the following definition of the social economy recorded in the terms of reference of one group: "Enterprises in the social economy differ from other enterprises by the nature of the goods and services offered; these have a social character." As one participant explained, "We quoted almost verbatim the definition in *Entre l'espoir et le doute*" (FG5-9). Another said, "Social economy enterprises differ from private-sector organizations in that they are working more for social profit" (FG5-9).

The *social character* of goods and services offered, the search for a *social profit* – these features seemed to form the core of the definition of the social economy commonly accepted during the first phase of the CRES' existence. In other words, social profitability implicitly defined the social economy.

Another continuing theme emerged from the group discussions: not only was the CRES-accepted definition of social economy drawn from *Entre l'espoir et le doute*, but so were the project selection criteria. One of the participants summed up the comments of several colleagues as follows:

> We did not invent anything. We took out the report *Entre l'espoir et le doute*, and then we took bits from within it and added a little [regional] sauce. (FG4-6, -7)

Project selection criteria were virtually the same as criteria for social profitability.

Only one focus group mentioned that in its region, money (and thus economic profitability) was a major criterion for selecting social economy projects submitted to the CRES: "Projects that were accepted had to be capable of going out and getting funding" (FG7-9). This provided the basis for rejecting certain projects: "In the objectives, the project definition, there had to be an economic slant, an economic activity" (FG7-11).

For the others, the reason for rejection that most closely resembled the ground of economic non-profitability was an applicant group's inability to keep people employed. Two groups stated that by using this criterion for rejection, they hoped to avoid a situation in which jobs applied for did not constitute measures of employability. The longevity of an organization was another of the selection criteria used by other CRES.

Some groups, however, presented a less pleasant picture of the first phase of the CRES:

> We applied the values we really wanted to apply, but we had to make big compromises on the three years and on consolidating jobs. We wanted to insist on job consolidation

> [but] the money went to [create] new jobs . . . because part of the funds came from the FDCE [Fonds décentralisé de création d'emplois[57]], and one of their criteria was job creation. We whittled away at the fine principles. (FG5-12)

Other compromises involved the PAIE programs, which were finally accepted "on condition that payment was at the hourly rate of $8.30. That was the condition that was stated" (FG5-12). The issue of the $8.30 hourly wage was very difficult to negotiate, in the opinion of all participants in this group. They concluded:

> In our selection of projects, as the CRES, we stuck to our criteria and our terms of reference. But what we identified as belonging to the social economy did not necessarily represent everything that was approved by the other committee that had to decide on our recommendations. . . . For example, their criteria did not allow them to approve job consolidation. (FG5-17)

Another group mentioned that government officials in their region refused to record the consensus decisions reached by the CRES when they were in accord with the criteria of feminist and community groups. An example given was the consensus on "$12.00 an hour for one year" (FG4-10).

Finally, as one participant said, "We had less trouble agreeing on social profitability than on social purpose" (FG5-13) since, for many, "whatever is not definitely profitable falls under the social economy."

Another group said that in the first phase of CRES, inability to be self-funding was never grounds for rejection: "We succeeded in negotiating, saying that [self-funding] should be an 'asset' but . . . not a criterion for rejecting projects" (FG1-10).

Except for one group, this picture changed altogether when the CRES expanded and the Conseil régional de développement (CRD) assumed responsibility for them: "We lost our position of strength" (FG2-5). It was mainly after the provincial government parachuted in-home help projects that the shift occurred, and the groups really had to deal with the criterion of economic profitability: "Then we saw the problem of social profitability, of self-financing, of pricing. The order came from the provincial government" (FG5-5).

In the first generation of CRES, "It was basically our values that we could apply, it was our values that created the criteria." But with the home help program, everything changed: "We had nothing to say on the values that were evident in the document and in the project. The concept of economic profitability was very, very important in that project" (FG5-5).

Other groups also associated the "economic shift" with the home help program "brought in by the province": "There was a social economy model that was profiled in the way that home help projects were presented"[58] (FG1-21). "From that point on [economic profitability] was put on the table . . . and I had the impression that it was going to be the next struggle in the new CRES" (FG5-4). Projects were "more and more economic in nature," with pricing and self-financing features: "There was no more talk of consolidating organizations or jobs, of job maintenance" (FG3-16).

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[57] At that time, the Fonds décentralisé de création d'emplois was part of the Secrétariat au développement des régions (now the Ministère des régions).

One of the participants summarized as follows what transpired from the time of the social infrastructure demand, which (for many women's groups) included consolidation of organizations: "And from talking in terms of consolidation we shifted . . . to talking in terms that had nothing to do with the social aspect. From then on the talk was of self-financing as quickly as possible" (FG3-8). According to one group, there was a huge "loss" at that time since, even if the social contribution of projects was discussed, "it was not integrated into the much-vaunted business plan" (FG1-22).

A few groups stated that from that point, they faced "two social economies": "There was the social economy and there were social economy enterprises" (FG1-22).

Only one group had a positive view of its experience in the second-generation CRES in terms of projects approved:

> The development [was] in the direction of clarifying . . . the major landmarks of the Women's March; after that, the expanded CRES adopted detailed terms of reference in the same direction, [with] a series of small points to measure the major landmarks: a written employment contract.[59]

B. Social profitability: barriers to genuine recognition

Beyond the pervading neo-liberal context, the disengagement of the government, and the gradual invasion of the social sector by private interests and their profit motive, many barriers blocked the path to genuine recognition of the social scope of women's activities in the social economy.

One barrier was the lack of definition of the model of society being sought. Thus when people talked of

> . . . job creation in a development sphere . . . we thought of a different societal model, but no one explained how it was different. What the model of society [would be] was not explained . . . the other model was not understood (FG1-48).

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[58] What is more specifically under discussion here is the necessity of performing a market study to demonstrate the viability of the project.

[59] The unusual view of this focus group may lie in its different make-up. Of the eight groups, this was the only one comprised of members of the same community group with activities described as in the economic, social and employment areas. See note 45 for our sampling criteria with regard to this group.

This lack of a defined societal model forced groups to turn to market logic to prove their "profitability." To be recognized as "profitable," they attempted to transpose the social economy onto the market economy model, although the social economy (at least in the sense intended by the women's groups who put forward the social infrastructure demand) was a different solution, an "alternative" to the market economy (FG1-39). Market logic forced them to define themselves as enterprises to prove their social profitability (FG2-17).

Some groups maintained that social profitability was already broadly recognized by the government: One participant said,

> It seems to me that we already had recognition of the actions we were taking, so much so that when the shift came to ambulatory care, community organizations were expected to take over. They weren't told to do so but it was expected of them. . . . We had recognition; it was just the hard cash that was lacking (FG4-13, -14).

A speaker from another group agreed: the problem was not so much the lack of recognition of social profitability as the fact that

> . . . it was not clear who must pay for this social profitability. . . . Who must pay for this "good work"? It was as if social profitability must pay for itself. No cost. Self-created (FG8-21).

Another participant compared this misleading way of thinking, or double standard (social recognition and economic non-recognition) to the cliché about women's work in the family: "She [the woman] has so much value that it [her work] cannot be evaluated" (FG1-38).

Seen as central to the non-recognition was the gender aspect, the fact that women's work had never been paid. It seemed

> . . . difficult to sell . . . women's traditional work because it is so devalued, undervalued. Whether you are a day care worker, whether you look after your grandparents, whether you are a home cleaner or cook inexpensive meals in a co-op, that is not profitable in the eyes of those who provide funding. It's women's work, it isn't valuable as employment. Very, very, very difficult to sell [it]. Not only in the groups but among ourselves it had to be discussed, and that was difficult. We had to recognize all the work that women have traditionally performed and that has never been paid because it is women's work. They do it as a matter of course; it's in their genes to look after the kids. They shouldn't be paid for doing that! And even with our own allies, the concept of valuable work was difficult to sell (FG7-27).

Similarly, another group discussed the "culture of employability,"[60] which seemed to be a "male culture" – "but not exclusively." In this regard, it was important

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[60] Here the participant was probably using government terminology. By "culture of employability," we believe she meant the culture of paid work. That, at least, is what is suggested by the rest of her remark.

> . . . also to question [the fact] that paid employment always develops according to so-called male values, while there could be other views of paid work as not filling, not defining all one's life as it does now. You could imagine each person doing some paid work, some work in private life and some voluntary work. That would be something entirely different (FG7-39).[61]

For most of the focus groups, social profitability first had to be addressed via the issue of basic funding of groups. To be socially profitable, it was necessary first to consolidate jobs, to consolidate groups, and thus to be assured of core funding (FG4-12):

> What do you need to be socially profitable? You need someone [to whom] you can offer a stable salary, and who can live on what she is paid. . . . Because establishing a project involves a lot more than hiring someone. It takes six months to settle someone into a job and train her in . . . the organization's culture, to put her in touch with others; then, after six months, she starts to work within the project you have established. This lasts six months and after that you say, "Sorry, my dear, but we have no more money . . . we wish you luck. We'll certainly give you a good reference." When . . . you talk of profitability, it starts there. . . . It starts after one year (FG4-12).

In the entire social economy process organized by the government, one mistake made by the groups was said to result from the fact that too many of them saw the social economy as a different way of obtaining funding, a way to make up for undependable and insufficient core funding. The social economy was seen as "one more program, one more fund" (FG2-17), a "financing opportunity (FG5-22). The following warning was given to women's groups in at least one region:

> Be cautious, do not apply for social economy money for something you usually put in your report, because of the danger that the Régie [the regional health and social services system] might reduce funds from the SOC [Programme de soutien aux organismes communautaires] and draw instead on social economy funds. (FG5-22)

Another focus group discussed the same issue in terms of "substituting one funding source for another" (FG6-28, -29).

Some focus groups felt genuine recognition of community work should come not from the social economy program but from true core funding (FG4-14). Another risk in this connection was the danger of becoming "subcontractors" for different government agencies (in health, education, etc.). To another participant it was a great "illusion" to believe that the future of community work lay in the social economy (FG6-68).

Beyond all these barriers to genuine recognition of the social profitability of women's social economic activities, many of the focus groups continued to link the problem with the very conception of social economy.

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[61] This utopian picture was presented in the course of a discussion in which the concept of a guaranteed minimum income seemed essential to realizing such an ideal.

According to these focus groups, two interpretations of the social economy were prevalent in Quebec, with two underlying ways of thinking. One was thinking in terms of "projects" related to solvent activities, a view espoused by the government and endorsed by the Chantier de l'économie sociale. The other was thinking in terms of "social change," related to the objective of building an "alternative" society; this was the thinking behind the Women's March infrastructure demand.

The problem with the conception of the social economy thus had to do with the watering-down of the definition of social economy. The Chantier and the government watered it down so much that "today [it] no longer bears any resemblance to us" (FG7-5). "The women's issue was completely eliminated [in second-generation CRES]" (FG7-6). The consequence of this watered-down definition was that social economy projects increasingly had a "very economic connotation." Other groups similarly said that the definition of social economy had changed unrecognizably from its original form (infrastructure) (FG5-40, FG6-66).

But that was not all. The problem also lay in the government's ambiguous language on social profitability:

> I think that another barrier [is] the message conveyed by the government in putting money into the social economy fund. The message is not clear about the social profitability of the social economy, and it is so vague that it allows or even encourages some divergence from the philosophy of social economy. Certainly it cannot send as clear a message of social profitability when it thinks of nothing but one matter: maintaining a zero deficit to keep playing the World Bank's "game." This is one of the efforts that is destroying everything (FG5-38).

The result was that some groups no longer wanted to be defined in terms of social economy. Others, however, seemed to accept being defined in this way, even slightly modifying their mission to bring it into line with the definition:

> There were community groups that did not want to be classified in the social economy sector . . . meaning that they said it was important to have sufficient funding [without necessarily coming] under the social economy fund [and that] it must be the government's responsibility to finance them. In contrast, there were other organizations that were community organizations but that, to be able to benefit from social economy funds, [had to turn themselves into] either users' co-operatives or social economy enterprises. This was the case in health and social services for all home help groups. And that was problematic. It had to do with the government's revamping of the concept of social economy. And that was a problem because there were community groups that had been in existence for a very long time and for a very long time had provided a particular service to the public, and now they had to change their structure as well as their mission. And that was a problem we all faced (FG2-16).

In other words, "If you say you are in the social economy, that means you agree to set a price for your services, you accept economic profitability, you accept many objectionable things, or you accept the argument [according to which] community organizations are also community enterprises. Do we want to be defined as an enterprise? That disturbs us because all in all it is a market economy viewpoint. . . . Are we required to use the terms of reference of the market economy to define ourselves? I'm not sure about that" (FG2-17).

As mentioned earlier, some groups commented that there now seemed to be "two social economies," "there is the social economy and there are social economy enterprises" (FG1-22).

In this regard, pricing short-circuits to some extent the search for a non-monetary measure to evaluate the social profitability of a social economy activity. According to some groups, pricing "greatly changes the nature of projects" (FG2-16). This issue will be the subject of a big debate among community organizations in the following months (FG6-31).

Another denial of social profitability was evidenced in the prevalence of the culture of economic profitability among Centres locaux de développement, "which had more of an economic development culture" (FG5-36), even though they were made responsible for the social economy. The most recent document on the topic, *Conjuguer l'économie et le social* (Ministère des Régions, 1998), required organizations submitting a social economy project to have a business plan but made no concrete specifications with regard to the social contribution of the project itself (FG1-44).

In short, the barriers to genuine recognition of the social significance of women's activities in the social economy (mentioned during our focus group sessions) range from the lack of a defined societal model as a reference point, to the difficulty of "selling" work traditionally performed by women. This refers not only to those providing funding but "among ourselves as well," in a world dominated by the "male culture" of paid work. Another key barrier to genuine recognition was the fact that groups were forced to view the social economy as a funding program to make up for the deficiencies of undependable core funding. Once the concept of the social economy had been watered down, the groups often found that they had to change their own definition and even their mission. In this regard, the introduction of pricing for services seems to have short-circuited the search for a non-monetary measure to evaluate the social profitability of a social economy activity. As mentioned, this will be the subject of a major debate among community organizations in the following months (FG6-31).

Other barriers to genuine recognition of the social profitability of social economy projects included the non-recognition of problems caused by poverty and a poor understanding of the effects of marginalization (FG8-21). Non-recognition of these problems leads in turn to non-recognition of the work performed in an attempt to solve them (FG3-37).

Additional barriers mentioned included the "time factor," that is the fact that the social impacts of work in the community are generally felt over the longer term (FG6-55, -56), and the threat that "increased citizenship" (FG3-37) might present. Last, the media's total lack of interest in the social economy was yet another barrier to genuine recognition of its social profitability (FG7-31).

C. Social profitability: illustration and measurement

What is the current state of thinking of social economy practitioners and activists in Quebec on measuring the social profitability of women's work in the social economy? Have they found indicators, or indicators of indicators, of the social benefits or social effects of such activities?

The focus groups, comprised of front-line activists defending the feminist social economy in Quebec (defined in the discussion of social infrastructure), could not give us the exact "tools for measuring, for establishing the value of social profitability and applying it in evaluation" (FG1-50), tools so urgently sought by all the groups we encountered.

The discussions in each focus group are aptly summarized in the following statement by one participant: "I think that there is a way either to quantify or measure the effects by naming them" (FG1-41).

This was the process undertaken by all focus group participants: examples were given of certain social benefits observed in the communities in which they worked, as well as possible ways of measuring the benefits. Although the process did not produce specific indicators, it at least clarified what we should find in our research.

We should note that the purpose of our research is not to set the economic value, in hard money, of the social aspect of activities in the social economy. It is not to evaluate the economic profitability of social activities. In the opinion of most of the focus groups, this study should be of a different nature. As one participant said,

> With a feminist approach, would it not also be a way of gaining recognition for the special character [of the contribution[62]] of women? . . . We all want to be able to name, to quantify things that people do not quantify. . . . How do women undertake evaluation compared with others? Because we are [still] trying to act . . . as if we took the market economy model to apply it to the social economy. But in terms of evaluation, is there a feminist way of evaluating, of identifying indicators? (FG1-50)

This statement describes the ultimate objective of our study, which originates in the expertise of practitioners and their knowledge of the field.

Starting point: clarify this "other" development model

In this effort to evaluate social activities and seek indicators for them, we have a starting point: "An indicator always depends on what objectives you are targeting and what vision of society you have" (FG1-5). Similarly, according to another group, social profitability must be evaluated with this question in mind: in what kind of society do we want to live? (FG2-3)

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[62] The words in parentheses are our interpretations, inserted to facilitate understanding. From a reading of the entire statement, we conclude that the participant was referring here to the special character of the *contribution* of women, the special nature of their work, rather than the *essential* (or innate) character too often attributed to women. But of course, this is an interpretation.

Participants said this is the major stumbling block to determining social indicators: measuring them depends largely on the vision of society underlying social economy activities and the values implied by that vision. As mentioned in two focus groups, however, the vision of society referred to, the "other" development model and the "alternative to the market economy" (FG1-39, -48) are all unknown.

Having determined this starting point, two groups (FG3 and FG8) offered very similar definitions of social profitability. This definition may be a good starting point for integrating all the examples of social profitability furnished by the different focus groups: Social profitability is "the entire range of social impacts[63] produced by a project. It is individual and collective" (FG8-9).

In the field of social economy, two major spheres of influence or impact are thus recognized. Social profitability may be seen first in the area of work created by the social economy project, and then in the community.

What is generated socially by a social economy project in the area of work where it is performed is, first of all, job satisfaction, understood in terms of personal growth: "It's the individual who is strengthened" (FG5-31). The personal growth occurs on at least three levels:

i) that of the individual through increasing her potential and her influence;
ii) that of the individual's immediate circle, especially her family; and finally
iii) that of her life in society.

The impacts thus are on the individual, her personal life, those close to her and her life in society – but also (and this is the second major sphere of impact) on the community.

The following impacts may be observed on the community:

i) on the specific community targeted by the activity in question, and particularly the people who benefit from it; and
ii) on the community in general, that is, locally/regionally.

Let us examine, in turn, these two major spheres of impact of social economy activities. We will then look at more specific examples of citizenship-generating projects suggested to us as illustrations of the impacts.

1. Impacts of social economy activities on paid staff

Summarized below are the social benefits mentioned by some or all of our focus groups.[64] Where applicable, we also note suggested leads to indicators of social profitability.

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[63] Should we amend the text to read "*positive* social impacts"?

[64] The number of focus groups that mentioned a particular social benefit did not seem relevant when analyzing their discussions, since the purpose of the analysis was to find information that might help determine indicators

a) Impact on the individual

Following are effects mentioned on the worker. Depending on the circumstances, work in the social economy:

- helps end a person's isolation and helps her return to society;
- helps her learn to work as part of a team;
- helps her learn to "socialize," to talk with other people;
- increases her potential, especially through training given;
- promotes mutual assistance;
- promotes a feeling of belonging to a group; and
- allows her to experience democracy, particularly by taking part in committees and through general training in participatory management (this last feature is particularly characteristic of work in the social economy).

The context of work in the social economy also involves other predictable effects, according to various participants. Depending on the circumstances, the work context may:

- increase self-esteem and perhaps even confer a social identity;
- encourage women to resume studies;
- encourage women to find work (in this regard, we note that for people who might have had difficulty performing successfully in a traditional job, the social economy work context helps them adapt to employment);
- help women regain control of their lives; and in their circles, help them "look to the future" and "re-awaken hope in others."

All of this is in addition to the preventive benefits. We will never know the number of medications, doctor's visits or hospital stays that the person has been spared.

The certain, predictable or preventive effects are referred to by others as direct and indirect impacts, or short-, medium- and long-term effects.

As for more specific indicators of these benefits, it has been suggested that we seek them among women working in the social economy, "those who have benefited from social economy money." Among the questions to be asked are: "What was your situation before? What do you think your situation is now?"

Others also stressed the importance and absolute necessity of consulting the people directly concerned when setting indicators of impacts. Among the comments: "Who are we to decide which indicator acts in such a way as to be a social impact?" "It makes me uneasy to identify indicators. When I say, "She has changed her pattern," who am I to say that she is better off in the new pattern?"

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of social profitability. All information is thus treated here as relevant, even if it was contributed by a single participant in a single focus group.

That is why it is important to have the participation of those directly concerned:

> When you ask us for indicators, these people know and often have wonderful examples to give of what self-esteem means to them, or assuming their full role, or having more dignity. [It is important to] contact women workers who have been involved for a longer time (FG8-30, -31).

From these statements on the subject of the benefits to someone working in a social economy project, we deduce that it would be valuable to examine indicators of personal impact, especially those that offer evidence of development of potential and re-assertion of control over one's life. Reinforcing this conclusion is the fact that several people apparently expressed the feeling "of having become a new person" (FG1-30). Similarly, it is necessary to find indicators of job satisfaction since the quality of the work environment and its nature as a "school for democracy" are essential features, differentiating social economy work from the traditional work environment.

b) Impact on those close to her

The fact "of having become a new person" through working in social economy activities has an impact as well on the person's family. Of course, this would be the same with any type of meaningful work.

In this context, improved communication with children was mentioned. This in turn, affects children's performance in school. For example, in certain circumstances, the fact of having initiated a legal separation, long delayed out of fear of the economic insecurity that might result, may prove socially "profitable" for a person.

From the statements on this topic, we deduce that it would be desirable to explore the entire field of indicators of influence, or impact, on one's immediate circle. The feeling "of having become a new person" influences these individuals as well. Indicators of this phenomenon must be found.

c) Impact on her life in society

In addition to the impact on the woman herself and on her immediate circle of friends and family, social economy activities generate another type of benefit for people working in the field: an impact on their lives in society.

"Experiencing democracy" within one's work environment (notably by participating in organizations as a member of a board of directors or head of a group) has other effects on the person's life. One example given was participation in other organizations outside the work environment, including Centres locaux de services communautaires (CLSC), parents' committees or advocacy groups.

We conclude from this that we must find indicators of active citizenship.

2. Impacts on the community and society

Social profitability may also be observed at the community level: in the specific community targeted by the social economy activity, and in society in the broadest sense.

a) Impact on the target community

The social profitability of a social economy activity may be observed in the targeted community, and chiefly in the people who benefit from the activity. A participant gave the following example of the benefits of a particular social economy activity, transportation for seniors:

> I saw women trapped at home because they had no means of transportation. . . . The effects of isolation are known. As soon as a very easily accessible bus service was set up, they would shop for groceries, attend community dinners, take part in self-managed groups, etc. I saw women start to go about everywhere . . . an incredible result! Before, they stayed home, they did nothing, and now they [were able to do] everything! They became involved in their community in different ways, they took part in neighbourhood activities, they did their grocery shopping. The result was that [these women could] take part in municipal activities, could join committees organizing seniors' activities as well as municipal activities. This can be measured by enumeration. We know that when a person participates a little more in her community, there are positive results for her and for the community. The same is true of seniors in places where they can move about and function like anyone else. The simple fact of going to buy groceries. I . . . have accompanied [such people]; the woman had not been eating, she wasn't hungry. Now she went to pick out a steak and vegetables for herself, saying, "That smells good!" Simply [seeing] the food, she felt like eating. The woman . . . got back on the bus and called out hello to someone she had not seen for 30 years (FG1-41).

From statements made on this topic, we conclude that indicators of "client" satisfaction should also be developed. Depending on the circumstances, other indicators might be the percentage of people reached by the service, or the frequency of use of the service.

b) Impact on the local/regional community

The social profitability of a social economy activity may be observed through its benefits to society in general, to the local/regional community.

Aside from helping destroy prejudices against the most disadvantaged members of society, the following benefits were highlighted:

- Revitalization of the community and the social fabric.
- Ability to check the exodus of different population categories. For example, an activity may help keep youth in a region.
- Similarly, the accessibility of certain services may help seniors or women in difficulties stay in their homes (e.g., women's shelters).

- Creation of high-quality jobs, especially for women who had not previously had access to employment, thus giving them the opportunity to take their place in society.

In their discussions, our focus groups gave little attention to specific indicators of social benefits for society in general. We conclude that this field needs to be explored, particularly the general literature on indicators of quality of life, health and "human development."

3. Examples of projects generating citizenship

In closing, we would like to present examples given us of types of social economy projects that have proven to surpass others in what we might call "generating citizenship."

Participants described certain projects as particularly effective in generating citizenship awareness and in "producing better citizens." Among the examples were "cuisines collectives" and garage sales to raise money for a common cause. We present them because their impacts on people help in our quest for indicators of social profitability.

With regard to "cuisines collectives", participants spoke of the "multiplier effect on the community":

> In "cuisines collectives", [women] learn to cook together at lower cost, they share experiences, they come out of their isolation, they learn to work as part of a team, all of which improves their self-esteem, etc., and can lead to other things. It can encourage women to resume studies if they wish to, or to find a job, or to be more active in their lives, or to take control of their lives. Those effects are important in a community. . . . I am sure there have been plenty of benefits from the Chic Resto Pop. You hear accounts of people who came back to life as a result. This is an individual benefit, individual social [benefit], which is important, but I want to say that it has a multiplier effect on the community. Those people return to their families, they are more at ease with themselves, and that has an effect on the family. It's a pebble thrown into water, with ripples spreading widely (FG1-26).

Concerning a garage sale for the benefit of a day care facility, one participant said,

> But last night the organizer, [whom I met] at a meeting, said, "As for the $1,000, basically it would have been the same to me if the sale had brought in $800 or $2,000. . . . If only you had heard what the women said to me on coming to sort the clothes, and all that they gained!" One woman said to her, "I'm lucky I came here because otherwise such-and-such a thing would have happened to me." . . . Then, during that time, the children were at the day care and the women came to work, they came one day a week to sort things, etc. They did this work from the end of March or beginning of April. By itself, just this activity helped the women learn to talk with each other, and maybe one of them was able to avoid a deeper depression, or another was able to take responsibility for herself more quickly, plus the mutual help that all these women will offer each other. So the social benefits exist in that activity. It cannot be expressed in dollars because we cannot know how many pills they won't buy, how

> many times they won't need to see a doctor, how many hospital stays will be avoided, all the health costs saved, but we can certainly say that it has a preventive effect. At the same time, the women became proud of performing the activity and seeing the amount they helped collect to finance their day care. . . .
>
> What I want to say is that there is a chain involved and the product, when they talk of access to a product, sometimes they include the chain in the product but sometimes they do not. . . . For example, a bag of clothes placed on the sales rack involves so many things: sorting, identifying the clothing, is it clean or not, how much is it worth, how much do you think we could ask for it. . . . So many educational activities are involved that promote self-responsibility. The woman will then see the general picture – because we always take a comprehensive approach – of what she is doing, [the entirety] of her interactions with others, right to the end to achieve a result. Surely that is a benefit, [that is] profitability! And this is without putting them through a long university course to be able to see the process, the link. And as for the environment, it is healthy because you are putting the clothing to use . . . you're not throwing it into the garbage and . . . it will be useful for other people. We're also working to redistribute wealth, we help in the redistribution. . . . The women feel that they are players in the process instead of staying at home [with] what that entails in terms of isolation, [with] what that causes. . . . This is mutual help (FG1-26, -27).

We make the distinction here between this type of "holistic" activity with a multiplier effect generating citizenship, and what is called "occupational" activity. An example mentioned was collecting branches after the ice storm of January 1998:

> When you speak of profitability, it's [the fact] that the person does not feel like just a number in a system but instead feels she is a player in achieving the objective (FG1-28)

Participants stressed that the women who had worked in this type of social economy project would be best qualified to state the indicators of social profitability inherent to those activities.

D. Conclusion: indicator needs

In summary, from the statements made in our focus groups, we see the value of exploring certain types of indicators:

- indicators of impact on the persons concerned (paid workers or activists and volunteers), especially those that record:
  - the development of those persons' different potentials, and
  - their re-assertion of control over their lives;
- indicators of job satisfaction (work that is paid and work that is performed as an unpaid activist/volunteer), since what distinguishes the social economy work environment from that of the traditional labour market is the quality of the work environment and the aim to be a "school for democracy";
- indicators of "influence" or impact on one's immediate social circle;

- indicators of active citizenship;
- indicators of the creation and development of social links and a sense of belonging;
- indicators of "client" satisfaction; and
- indicators of the impact on local/regional quality of life.

These categories should guide our search for measurement tools. However, our advisory committee wished to clarify that the categories should not be restrictive. Our search for indicators of social profitability should go beyond the vast field of indicators of high-quality employment or integration of marginalized people, to address the very mission of organizations. The search must extend to indicators of "collective impact" directly connected with the groups' missions. More generally, research is needed to answer the question of how to measure the work of groups in terms of social profitability, and thus to evaluate each group's long-term impact in terms of its social purpose.

All of this meant that we needed to explore qualitative measurement tools in the vast field of measuring "social" activities.

III. QUALITATIVE MEASUREMENT OF SOCIAL PROFITABILITY

In this section, we first review various possible approaches to the measurement of social profitability. We then discuss the approach we have chosen, of using social and community indicators. Next we analyze some historical and methodological aspects of the community indicators trend. Section IV of the study will present the major features of our own set of indicators.

A. Measuring social profitability: the various approaches

The need to develop qualitative indicators of social profitability, voiced in our focus groups, led us to a second phase of data collection.

We first consulted specialists in the qualitative evaluation of various fields (particularly prevention, program evaluation and impact analysis). We also consulted some social economy practitioners with special experience and/or special knowledge in the area of qualitative evaluation.[65]

The aim of the consultations was to bring us up to date on qualitative measurement instruments being developed here, particularly with regard to our field of research: measurement of the social contribution of women's groups and community groups, and measurement of their long-term social impact, for the purpose of identifying the "social profitability" of their activities. The consultations showed us that our research theme had previously been very little explored. They also helped us identify which approaches held potential as indicators of social profitability. Of the approaches, we shall briefly mention those more closely related to our research theme.

The search for indicators of social profitability, or its potential measurement, may be undertaken from the *angle of the historical contribution of groups.* This would involve proving in some way the social profitability of women's and community groups by studying the historical influence of their activities, particularly on policy changes, on changes in institutional practices, and on expansion of public services. Community action, we know, is a laboratory for social trials of new practices,[66] which may eventually be applied throughout society. Such an approach presents major difficulties, not the least of which is to identify reliable, generally applicable measures for proving this influence.

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[65] We met or contacted the following persons: Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay, economist, Télé-Université; Cécile Sabourin, economist, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières; Danielle Fournier and Solange Cantin of the École de service social at the Université de Montréal; William A. Ninacs, community development consultant and teacher; Liliane Goulet, Service aux collectivités, Université du Québec à Montréal; Jean-Pierre Bélanger, Conseil québécois de la recherche sociale; Lorraine Guay and Lourdes Rodriguez del Barrio, Regroupement des ressources alternatives en santé mentale; Michèle Charland, Développement québécois, sécurité des femmes; Josée Belleau, former liaison officer, l'R des Centres de femmes; Vivian Labrie, Carrefour de pastorale en milieu ouvrier; Agnès Dupriez of Villes et Villages en Santé; Claude Quiviger, Social Development, City of Montréal ("Vivre Montréal en santé" project); Lise Brunet, United Way; and B.J. Richmond, of B.J. Richmond Consulting Services, Toronto. In one way or another, all these people helped clarify different possible approaches to determining qualitative indicators of the social contribution of groups. While noting that they are not in any way responsible for our conclusions, we wish to sincerely thank them for the time they kindly gave us and for the various insights they offered.

Another possible approach to measurement of the social contribution or impact of the activities of women's and community groups consists of what might be called *proof by the lack of community action in a particular area*. This would involve comparing the social fabric of an area *without* community groups with that of an area *with* a community movement, and would represent a significantly different approach to the task at hand. We chose not to take this approach because of the considerable additional resources required to carry out such research.

Still another approach could take the form of *proof by prevention and by social costs*. Extensive literature exists on the subject of prevention in the fields of health and violence, but it seems that none of these works have been perused from the viewpoint of social profitability.[67]

There is also the vast field of *program evaluation and group self-evaluation* to consider. The works suggested to us on this topic dealt with evaluation either of a particular organization or of a specific project. We did not succeed in finding any comprehensive, transversal studies that might have put us on the track of more general indicators of activity or social impact, or of a more appropriate methodology that might permit measurement of this impact.

Still another approach is called *social audit*. This involves assigning a market value to the "products" and services supplied by non-profit organizations (NPOs). The value is obtained by comparing the market value of similar products or services. An economic value is also assigned to the indirect impacts of the products or services of NPOs as the social cost savings they make possible.[68] This method, focusing on assigning an economic value to services, was not the one we intended to take in our search for indicators of social contribution. Moreover, our focus groups had supported our decision.

Ultimately (the approaches mentioned here are not, of course, the only ones possible), we chose a different way of proceeding: a qualitative approach that consists of proving the social profitability of group activities by demonstrating their "social wealth" and their contribution to a community's collective well-being and quality of life.

This way of proceeding falls under the social indicators approach, which includes (for example) the new indicators of progress (Redefining Progress, 1995) as well as human development indicators, such as those used since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme in its annual reports.

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[66] Or so Lorraine Guay reminded us during the consultation she kindly granted us.

[67] That, at least, was the opinion of some of the specialists we met. This opinion is similar to the one expressed by Bernard Cassen: among the new tools of analysis that are to be developed and that could replace "the concepts that provide the framework for the rhetoric of economic efficiency," he names "non-expenditures due to prevention" (Cassen, 1998, p. 11).

[68] This is the method developed by B.J. Richmond Consulting Services. See Richmond, 1996, 1998.

However, the overwhelming majority[69] of these types of indicators are based on quantitative valuation of social problems, or on "economic development measurement integrating social considerations" (Bernier, 1999, p. 19).

For our part, we are in search rather for criteria of *social* wealth, intended to support *social* profitability, the *social* aspect of the social economy activities of women's groups. "Community" indicators, the trend that promotes them and the experiments that shape them seem to us best suited to our research perspective and to our goal.

B. Choice of a set of social and community indicators of social profitability

Promoted as "Sustainable Communities" or "Healthy Cities," this trend seeks to develop a more balanced and "holistic" vision of human progress. Using new measures of progress, this approach takes into account aspects such as: quality of life; quality of the environment; living conditions; life expectancy; access to educational, social and cultural resources; valuation of the unpaid contribution of women to global economic activity; and valuation of the social contribution of the voluntary sector (in which the majority of workers are women).

The approach we have chosen for our research thus lies within the sphere of the community indicators trend, its writings and its practices. This is the direction in which we shall develop our set of indicators of the social profitability of women's and community groups.

In the following paragraphs, we examine some historical aspects of the community indicators trend, methods used to develop such indicators and, finally, the most frequently employed categories of indicators.

1. Community indicators trend: a citizens' initiative

This trend emerged in the socio-economic climate of the late 1980s, a period characterized by increasing environmental concern in the wake of irreversible environmental disasters, the Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, the popularization of the "holistic" concept of sustainable development, worsening socio-economic problems in local communities as a result of neo-liberal government policies, deterioration of the social fabric, and the ensuing loss of public confidence in government and elected officials.

The time was right for the emergence of citizens' movements in North America and Europe, organized with the objective of establishing common criteria (in fact, indicators) of quality of life and well-being at the community level. The aim was also to involve municipal representatives in the process. The community indicators "movement," as some would call it, was born.

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[69] See Appendix 5 of this report, in which various categories of social indicators are reviewed.

Sustainable development, quality of life, and the well-being and progress of societies must be measured by indicators other than the traditional economic and monetary ones of various Western countries' national accounting systems. What approach would enable us to measure "progress" differently?

On both sides of the Atlantic, and in over 200 communities in the United States so far, impressive numbers of citizens have been invited to join this effort. In Britain, in a recent survey, 90 per cent of local governments answered that they were taking part in an Agenda 21 process, a national effort to develop community indicators. The Healthy Cities movement, launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) – in which Quebec has participated since 1987 – had 2,000 participating municipalities in 1996, including over 300 in Canada.

All of these experiments are based on the premise that there is no single master list of indicators applicable to all communities. There is no magic formula for determining indicators. Each interested community must go through the process. This is the first step to guaranteeing the success of the endeavour.

As a process, then, the development of community indicators emerges as a new citizens' initiative, in which meeting and achieving consensus on objectives, priorities for action and valuation criteria (indicators) is as important as achieving the goal (if not more so). It may be said that a community's success in developing its indicators of progress is itself an indicator of progress – or of social profitability, to use our terminology.

2. Methodology for developing community indicators

How does the democratic process of selecting community indicators develop? We shall give examples of three different types of experiments: the U.S. experiment of Redefining Progress, which is intended as a kind of clearing house for the 200 communities throughout the United States that have adopted indicators of progress; the method developed by the New Economic Foundation in Britain; and last, that proposed by Villes et Villages en santé [Healthy Towns and Villages] in Quebec.

a) U.S. method of Redefining Progress

The participatory approach to developing community indicators involves several stages. A public policy institute in San Francisco, Redefining Progress, uses it own Web site and publications as well as other media in an effort to establish links between the roughly 200 community indicators initiatives in the United States. It has systematized the process and developed a "prototype."[70]

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[70] Redefining Progress, Sustainable Seattle, Tyler Norris Associates, 1997. Redefining Progress has also published *The Genuine Progress Indicator: Summary of Data and Methodology*. See Redefining Progress, 1995.

The process involves 10 stages:

1. Create a task force.
2. Clarify the goals of the initiative.
3. Identify shared community values and vision.
4. Examine existing models of indicators.
5. Develop a preliminary set of proposed indicators.
6. Decide on a participatory review and validation process.
7. Convert the list of desired indicators into measurable indicators.
8. Seek data.
9. Publish and publicize the report.
10. Regularly update the report.

This approach draws heavily on the process developed for the Sustainable Seattle project in 1992-93 (Palmer and Conlin, 1997), which subsequently inspired a number of similar projects in the United States. Along with this, let us examine the process proposed by the New Economic Foundation in Britain.

b) Method of the New Economic Foundation

The indicator development process systematized by the New Economic Foundation (1998) involves six stages:

1. Getting started

The first step in the U.S. process is to organize an initial meeting. This involves forming a group of people representing as many sectors of the population as possible, including groups customarily excluded from the decision-making process.

2. Agreeing on issues

In this stage, the group must reach agreement on community concerns, such as education, the environment or crime. The group draws up a list of major areas of shared concern, which could provide the basis for a set of indicators at a later stage.

3. Choosing indicators

After preparing a list of shared concerns, the group goes on to choose types of indicators that could measure these concerns. Another list is drawn up in accordance with each social concern.

4. Gathering information

This is the stage of translating the *desired* indicators into available data. If unavailable, means must be found to develop new data.

5. Communication progress

This stage involves translating the agreed-upon indicators into a form understandable to the general public.

6. Taking action

The goals of the process of identifying indicators are education and action. Taking action and defining indicators are interrelated processes. The community must pursue the development of indicators with the appropriate decision-makers; the indicators vary from group to group.

c) Method proposed by Villes et Villages en santé

Villes et Villages en santé propose the "strategic vision workshop" (or guided visualization) method:

> It's a kind of organized tour into the world of the imagination whereby participants can explore the ideal neighbourhood in an ideal city. Restrictions and censorship are suppressed in order to identify means of acting to achieve participants' desired objectives and not solely what they see as realistic objectives. The process helps create an idea bank on means that may be innovative and at the same achievable (Vivre Montréal en santé, 1993).

This method seeks to encourage the participation of the entire community by facilitating broad discussion and involvement by stakeholders concerned about quality of life in towns and villages.

There are three major stages to a "strategic vision workshop": the guided fantasy, identification of means for developing it, and summary of the workshop. Participants thereby define commonly agreed-upon means for achieving the final objective: a healthy city, neighbourhood or village.

As the reader will note, this methodology for developing community indicators draws heavily on the tradition of the popular education movement and its civic practices. Apart from noting its origins, these few words on the methodologies adopted by various countries for choosing community indicators highlight the fact that the process cannot be undertaken behind closed doors or by a single person. To be useful, the set of community indicators must be designed, validated and verified democratically, with broad public participation. We must take inspiration from these initiatives in developing our indicators, in a further research stage.

3. Most commonly chosen categories of indicators

The number of communities engaged in developing indicators is increasing exponentially, although so far their experiments are not reflected in academic research. What follows is certainly not an exhaustive review of the still-scattered literature: we made our selection from the small part we were able to assemble in a relatively short period. Nevertheless, we believe our review of the literature affords an accurate impression of the field.

In the following section we present the set of indicators we have identified for our study. First, however, we shall give an overview of the major *categories* of indicators most commonly selected by communities in their indicator development initiatives.

The effort to develop community indicators generally proceeds from one core concept. Some communities have developed indicators starting from the concept of *sustainable development* (sustainable indicators); the categories and their indicators thus deal chiefly with environmental concerns, interpreted from a holistic, global viewpoint. Other communities have designed indicators based on the concept of *quality of life,* while still others have started from the perspective of *social and community health* and its constituent factors, as developed by the Healthy Cities movement. The different concepts, which subsequently provide the basis for formulating indicators, are not mutually exclusive and often overlap.

From the core concepts, we thus arrive at the major categories of indicators. These may be arranged under quite similar chapter headings, as we shall see.

In the early 1980s, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) drew up a list of social indicators in eight categories, described as "social concerns." They are: health; education and learning; employment and quality of working life; time and leisure; command over goods and services; the physical environment (housing conditions, accessibility to services, environmental nuisances); the social environment (social attachment); and personal safety (OECD, 1982, p. 13).

In its *Communities Count! A Step by Step Guide to Community Sustainability Indicators* (1998), the New Economic Foundation gave as an example the major categories of indicators (called "common issues" in Britain) developed by the city of Leicester. They are: crime; transport and traffic fumes; employment and the local economy; housing; leisure, facilities and culture; wildlife parks and open spaces; a clean city; participation and local democracy; education; health; equity and discrimination; buildings, streets and town planning; energy and waste; and community and neighbourhoods (pp. 37–38).

In the United States, Redefining Progress (1997) summarized the major categories of indicators chosen by the 200 communities engaged in the development process. The categories are health, governance, education, art and culture, public safety, leisure, transportation, economic diversity, housing, economic vitality, land conservation and use, water quality and quantity, wildlife, air quality, waste recycling, renewable resources, and human services (p. 31).

In its extensive 1997 study of quality of life in Ontario, the Ontario Social Development Council identified four major categories: health, economy, environment and the social sphere, as well as 13 indicators in those categories (Shookner, 1998).

In the Vivre Montréal en santé project (connected with the Quebec Network of Healthy Towns and Villages), the City of Montréal decided on the following categories of indicators for creating neighbourhood profiles: community life (local democracy, community dynamics, joint action, socialization) and framework for living (neighbourhood economy, town planning, environment, urban safety) (Vivre Montréal en santé, 1993).

As we can see, while the major categories of indicators vary, they ultimately have much in common. Frequently found categories are health, safety, education, environment, leisure, housing, transportation, economic vitality, civic participation and community life. In *Communities Count!* (1998), the New Economic Foundation notes:

> Most people in most communities actually turn out to be concerned about much the same things. Even if they don't agree on terminology or relative importance, people do seem to agree strongly on the fact that the issues facing their communities begin to look very similar: health, personal security, education, the environment, jobs, transport, leisure (p. 31).

4. Different types of indicators

There are several types of social indicators, varying with the goal sought (diagnostic indicators, process indicators, impact indicators[71]). Statistics are commonly used to measure indicators, as are opinion surveys for subjective indicators.

According to the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) – an organization that plays a leadership role in Europe in work on indicators[72] – sustainable indicators, to take an example, may be of three types. One type, called the *simple indicator*, answers simple questions: How much? In what proportion? It has its limitations, however, as it can tell us only whether the phenomenon under study is beneficial or detrimental. It says nothing, for instance, about the changes its adoption might bring about.

ICLEI describes a second type of indicator, called the *linkage indicator*, which measures and evaluates interactions between economic activities, benefits for society and environmental impacts. This type of indicator still expresses a relationship between two sectors. An example is the proportion of green zone used per job created. Such an indicator often gives rise to new ideas since it involves a new, integrated way of looking at reality.

The last type of indicator, called the *distance-to-target indicator*, is used when the goals and targets of an activity have been well identified in the participatory process of developing indicators. It marks the distance to be covered to achieve objectives and targets. This type of indicator could be highly useful in measuring performance, according to ICLEI.

There are still other ways of categorizing types of indicators. For example, Antoine Moreau (1998, p. 47) sees output indicators (which measure the result of activities in a particular field), input indicators (which measure inputs to a particular system, such as funds invested), activity indicators (which measure the activities undertaken to achieve a particular objective),

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[71] Cardinal, 1988.

[72] See New Economic Foundation, 1998, pp. 80–81.

objective indicators (based on controlled measurements of behaviour or situations) and subjective indicators (based on opinions and perceptions).

Given the preliminary nature of our research, which is still at the stage of exploring "desired" indicators, we applied various types of indicators without distinction. Our sole aim was to identify tangible signs of a community's quality of life and social fabric and the contribution of women's and community groups to this quality.

This brings us to the set of indicators we have selected for our study.

IV. SELECTED SET OF INDICATORS

A. Indicators of quality of life, quality of social fabric and social contribution

We began by undertaking a preliminary identification of indicators, working from information drawn from various sources:

1. literature produced by the social and community indicators movement[73];
2. our own review of the literature by women's and community groups on the topic of their social contribution; and
3. the deliberations of our focus groups.

As noted above, our focus groups had called for "universal" indicators of impact on individuals, among other things. As studied by William Ninacs (1995), since empowerment is a process, it is difficult to set master-indicators for it that would be valid at all times, in all places and for all people. To successfully identify the impact of a certain activity on an individual, it would be necessary to use the "life stories" method, which falls outside the scope of this study. Thus, the groups will not find here the type of indicators they requested. Instead, the selected focus of the set of indicators of social profitability is on two interrelated core concepts: the quality of life of a community and the quality of its social fabric.

On the basis of these two concepts, one question served as epigraph for our research, and to some extent it provided a perspective for interpreting the literature: *How do women's and mixed-gender community groups contribute to the formation, development and revitalization of the social fabric of a community, and to its quality of life?* This was the question that enabled us to operationalize the concept of "social profitability" – the contribution to a community's quality of life and the quality of its social fabric. Our set of indicators thus contains indicators of community quality of life and social fabric, as well as indicators of social contribution.

Further, one core criterion guides our selection of indicators of social contribution: *the capacity of certain resources to empower*[74] *citizens* – men and women, as individuals and as a community.

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[73] This preliminary exploration of relevant community indicators covered the following sources: OECD, 1982; UNDP, 1994, 1995; Conseil des affaires sociales, 1990; Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 1997; Brink and Zeesman, 1998; Bernier, 1999; Redefining Progress et al., 1997; New Economic Foundation, 1998; and Vivre Montréal en santé, 1993. The Web sites of certain organizations (e.g., Redefining Progress, the Canadian Council on Social Development, etc.) provide access to literature on other community indicator experiments, particularly in the United States.

[74] On the concept of empowerment as a process, see the works of William A. Ninacs, especially Ninacs, 1995.

This ability is regarded as a prerequisite for individuals or communities to take control of their own development in all aspects of our selected set of indicators.

The idea underlying our work was to establish reference points so that, in their own activities, groups might perhaps be able to determine their social profitability and understand how other groups have identified theirs by going through the same process. The ultimate aim is to offer a tool for making visible and supporting the social profitability of the work of women's groups in communities.

In our selected set of indicators, we thus have two types of *desired* indicators (because that is as far as we have reached):

1. indicators[75] that describe and illustrate various fundamental aspects of the quality of life of a community (quality of health, work, housing, transportation, environment, citizenship, social ties, etc.), focusing on the production of goods and services essential to life in society and useful to that community; and
2. indicators of the contribution of women's and community groups to communal quality of life and social fabric.

In describing various aspects of quality of life, the first type of indicators helps describe and detail a vision of the world, one "different" from the current one. This helps make a little more concrete a social "alternative," based on a pluralistic vision of development. Thus, in the description of various aspects of quality of life, we find contributions and initiatives originating from non-community (public or private) resources or services that also contribute to this quality of life.

The second type of desired indicators – indicators of contribution – is intended to support this "social profitability" (which is so difficult to measure or even identify) of the activities of women's and community groups.

As is evident, this is an inductive process relying on the civic practice that characterizes the development of community indicators – a practice on which we have drawn.

Accordingly, we did not start by stating rigid terms of reference or a fixed vision of society, with the associated indicators. Instead we took the opposite approach. Each women's group active in its community was asked to appraise the situation in which it worked. Then, on the basis of this appraisal, indicators were developed of quality of life and social fabric, as well as of social contribution to this quality.

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[75] By indicators, here we mean tangible signs of a phenomenon – in this case, tangible signs of a community's quality of life and social fabric, as well as of the contribution of groups to this quality.

The set of desired indicators then underwent preliminary validation by two different groups.[76] Following this, it was examined by our advisory committee and two other specialists.[77]

The selected set of indicators is thus the outcome of various successive procedures. All the same, it remains at an exploratory stage as it has yet to go through a more extensive validation process, as required by the speicific methodology for developing community indicators.[78]

It also remains at an exploratory stage for another reason: as already noted, what we have is simply a set of "desired" indicators. We have tried to identify the social contribution of groups through immediately observable signs, without considering the availability of sources for measuring this effect. Nor were we any further ahead in specifying each of these signs, a task involving a different type of research (statistics, surveys, etc.).

Last, our set of indicators remains at an exploratory stage because during this first stage of validation of (desired) indicators – which might correspond more or less to the "guided visualization" phase described by Villes et Villages en santé – we arrived at an excessive number of indicators. Indeed, the multiple consultations and validations tended to increase exponentially the number of desired indicators. This suggests a further step of setting criteria for selection, grouping and removal of some indicators – something we could not do in the time available.

As noted above, there is no single master list of indicators for this field, certainly nothing that would hold valid for all groups. Rather, it is up to each group to determine its indicators on the basis of its mission and the special features of its region or locality, through a broad participatory process. This does not mean it is necessary to start from zero every time – one group could draw on the experiments of others. Similarly, the set of indicators presented here draws on earlier experiments in developing community indicators.

B. The nine major categories of indicators

We have identified nine major categories, with more detailed sub-categories. Under these we shall group the various indicators in a later stage. The categories and sub-categories are as follows:

1. Material living conditions
   (Refers to access to the basic resources needed for living in decent conditions, and to their quality.)

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[76] See Section I.F.4 of this study.

[77] The specialists mentioned were Professor Danielle Fournier of the École de service social at the Université de Montréal, and Josée Belleau, consultant, former liaison officer at l'R des Centres de femmes du Québec and one of the drafters of the social infrastructure demand of the Women's March Against Poverty.

[78] As presented in an earlier section, "Methodology for developing community indicators" (Section III.B.2 of this study).

- housing
- food
- clothing and toys

2. Physical environment
(Refers to town planning, and the presence of service infrastructure, transportation, public facilities and green space, to their accessibility, their availability at no charge and their quality.)

- town planning
- basic services
- road infrastructure
- transportation modes
- public facilities
- green spaces

3. Social environment
(Refers to the social setting of a community, the social ties between individuals, security of persons and goods, community dynamics, and facilities for meeting, planning action and socializing, in terms of access and quality.)

- social ties
- security of persons and goods
- community resources
- accessibility
- co-operation
- citizens' action

4. Economic environment
(Refers to community economic health.)

- diversity of economic sectors
- local economic development

5. Health conditions
(Refers to the physical and mental health of persons – adults, women and children – as well as access to public, quasi-public and community health services, and their quality.)

- children's health
- physical and mental health
- women's health

6. Working conditions
(Refers to paid work and its quality, as well as the invisible work of women.)

- the invisible work of women

- access to employment in the local labour force
- quality of working life

7. Personal development / self-awareness / self-dependence
(Refers to that which is covered by the concept of personal development, the opportunities offered for developing one's potential, as well as acquisition of resources, knowledge and skills necessary not only for life and living but also for quality of life.)

- education/learning
- art/culture
- leisure

8. Civic involvement / citizenship
(Refers to "civic spirit," active citizenship and whatever is related to citizenship training; also refers to participation in elections and various community representational bodies, to related community initiatives, to the exercise of rights, etc. Also includes voluntary involvement: activism, volunteerism.)

- training in "civic spirit" and active citizenship
- community initiatives

9. Natural environment
(Refers to the quality of a community's ecosystem: water, air, noise, natural green spaces, landscape quality.)

- water quality
- air quality
- soil quality
- noise level
- waste recycling
- natural green spaces
- cleanliness of neighbourhood/community, and general quality of the locality

These major categories are "social concerns," "issues" or "missions" that community groups can adopt, and that are evidence of the quality of life to which a community aspires.[79] In other words, they are "headings" or "umbrellas" under which can be grouped tangible, observable signs of these concerns (or missions). These observable signs are "indicators."

C. Desired indicators

Our desired indicators refer to the quality of life and the quality of the social fabric of a community, as well as to the contribution of different players or groups to its development and to the revitalization of its social fabric. Following then are indicators that relate to the *portrait* of the quality of life of one or another sector, and other indicators that relate to the *contribution* of groups and/or individuals to that quality of life.

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[79] In spirit, these social concerns resemble the main components of the concept of the "development flower" – indicators of genuine development – with economic, social, political, cultural, environmental and ethical "petals." On this topic see Guay, 1997, p. 102.

1. MATERIAL LIVING CONDITIONS

(Refers to access to the basic resources necessary for living in decent conditions, and to their quality.)

Housing

- Access to housing
  - Percentage of tenants spending 50 per cent of their budget on housing.
  - Existence of programs for establishing non-profit, community-owned housing, in non-outlying areas that encourage mingling of social classes, and close to basic services.
  - Accessibility of suitable housing situated in non-outlying, non-isolated areas close to services, where pets are allowed.
  - Existence of a genuine government rent control program.
  - Presence of sufficient numbers of shelters for the homeless.
  - Existence of housing that is architecturally and financially accessible for persons with limited mobility (seniors, persons with disabilities), located close to services accessible by paratransit.
  - Presence of community resources for assisting tenants and defending their rights.
  - Presence of resources and tools for identifying "bad" landlords.

- Access to property
  - Presence of resources for establishing sufficient numbers of co-ops.
  - Presence of municipal programs for access to property.
  - Existence of housing renovation programs.

- Housing quality
  - Presence of community resources concerned with the quality of rental housing in the neighbourhood (healthfulness, etc.) and its physical and financial availability.
  - Presence of sources of home furniture or equipment in good condition, at low prices.
  - Existence of sufficiently spacious and soundproof housing, meeting each occupant's right to privacy.

Food

- Access to food resources
  - Presence of food banks.
  - Presence of food co-ops.
  - Presence of community kitchens.
  - Presence of people's restaurants ("resto-pop").

  - Presence of neighbourhood restaurants.
  - Presence of community gardens.
  - Presence of collective purchasing group.
  - Presence of co-ops stores.
  - Presence of full-range grocery shops with a fair policy of "specials" and affordable delivery service.
  - Presence of consumer groups and groups tracking food prices.
  - Presence of public markets.
  - Presence of affordably priced fresh produce stores.
  - Presence of affordably priced natural food stores.
  - Presence of local manufacturers and producers of affordably priced food products.
  - Presence of affordably priced caterers with home delivery service for seniors, ill persons, persons with disabilities or infirm relatives.
  - Presence of "meals on wheels" services.
  - Possibility of access to food resources outside regular hours.

- Nutritional quality
  - Presence of nutrition education services.
  - Presence of community initiatives guaranteeing access to a healthy, varied diet at affordable prices and produced with respect for the environment and for human beings.
  - Presence of initiatives seeking to modify consumption practices and producer-consumer relations (e.g., fair-trade coffee).

Clothing and toys

- Presence of community sources of "previously owned" clothing, where one can dress oneself in an atmosphere of human dignity and respect.
- Presence of community resources for recycling clothes and toys.
- Accessibility of toy lending libraries.
- Presence of local clothing and toy shops.

2. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

(Refers to town planning and the presence of service infrastructure, transportation, public facilities and green space, to their accessibility, their availability at no charge and their quality.)

Town planning

- Existence of an urban planning program in the municipal government.
- Existence of an urban planning program that takes into account personal safety (women, children, persons with disabilities).
- Existence of a plan for developing roads and buildings usable by persons in wheelchairs or transporting packages or children in strollers/carriages.
- Presence of bicycle parking areas.

Basic services

- Presence of high quality firefighting services.
- Presence of adequate road paving, cleaning and maintenance services.
- Presence of adequate water supply and sewer services.
- Presence of affordably priced energy sources (electricity, heating oil, propane gas, gasoline).
- Presence of adequate postal services and communications infrastructure, affordable and of good quality (private telephone lines, cable TV, Internet access providers, etc.).
- Presence of laundry/drycleaning services.
- Presence of shoe repair shops.
- Presence of all types of repair services.
- Presence of medical services geographically accessible 24 hours a day.
- Presence of pharmacies with delivery service.

Road infrastructure

- Presence of sidewalks and/or reserved or protected lanes for pedestrians.
- Presence of reserved lanes on roads and highways for people who use bicycles or in-line skates for daily transportation.
- Presence of audible or graphic street signals for people who are visually impaired, hearing-impaired or illiterate.

Transportation modes

- Range of affordable alternatives to the automobile.
- Presence of safe paratransit services for seniors and persons with disabilities.
- Presence of reasonably priced public transportation services (buses, delivery vans, taxis) giving access to various public services, health and educational institutions, industrial and business parks, and recreational parks or residential areas.
- Presence of (community-run or private, locally based) car-pooling groups or associations.
- Presence of collective purchasing and use services for automobiles or trucks (e.g., Commun-Auto).
- Presence of services for renting cars, delivery vans and trucks – preferably co-operative and community-owned (or locally based private firms).
- Existence of flexible regulations for school bus and paratransit services, allowing free spaces to be used by adults or non-disabled persons.

Public facilities

- Presence of varied, affordable day care services (at work, respite child care, respite for parents of children with developmental problems) and services for emergency situations (e.g., hospitalization) that are physically and financially accessible, of good quality and offering safety guarantees.

- Accessibility of community arenas and playgrounds outside school hours and during school holidays.
- Presence of swimming pools without admission charges.
- Re-use and refurbishing of vacant buildings for community purposes.
- Presence of libraries or documentation centres accessible at no charge.
- Accessibility of municipal and parish offices and infrastructure.

Green spaces

- Access to rest areas, playgrounds, parks and shaded areas that are safe and usable by seniors or persons with limited mobility.
- Presence of landscaped areas giving access to banks of waterways (if any) flowing through the municipality.
- Presence of groomed hiking paths.

3. SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

(Refers to the social setting of a community, the social ties between individuals, security of persons and goods, community dynamics, facilities where people can meet and plan action, and facilities for potential exchanges and socializing, in terms of access and quality.)

Social ties

- Existence of facilities and activities for breaking down social isolation, that are physically and financially accessible.
- Existence of recognizable reference centres in a community.
- Existence of accessible facilities and activities encouraging intercultural and inter-generational exchanges in a community.
- Existence of public or informal facilities where people can meet in their free time (convenience stores, coffee shops, post offices, etc.).
- Presence of spontaneous, informal neighbouring practices (mutual responsibility, mutual help, sharing).
- Existence of support hotlines for people in distress.
- The number of people who do not use community services and who are not otherwise reached (e.g., never go to CLSCs).

Security of persons and goods

- Existence of safe facilities for women and children who are victims of violence (safe houses, halfway houses, etc.), that are geographically accessible as well as architecturally accessible for persons with disabilities.
- Existence of groups working to combat violence and discrimination against women, children, gays and lesbians, and persons with limited mobility.
- Existence of programs encouraging neighbourhood responsibility (e.g., "good neighbour" or "S.O.S. relatives" programs).
- Existence of community resources for raising awareness of violence.

- Existence of resources/programs for detecting situations of violence against women, children, seniors, persons with disabilities or dependent persons.

Community resources[80]

- Fields of action
  - Existence of community groups
    1. mixed community groups
    2. women's centres
    3. social clubs and voluntary/professional associations
  - Variety of fields of action covered by women's and community groups.
  - Breakdown of types of action by field of interest:
    1. mutual help and support
    2. local development planning – groups with an overall vision (of sustainable development) wishing to put in place new resources
    3. advocacy
    4. popular education
  - Existence of community media outlets.

- Accessibility
  - Number of women using community services in proportion to the total population of the neighbourhood/community.
  - Spectrum of population reached.
  - Geographic accessibility of community services.

- Concensus-based action/consultation
  - Presence of locally organized co-operative bodies.
  - Breakdown of co-operation by field.
  - Number of groups invited by the authorities to take part in consultations on draft legislation; frequency and nature of consultations.
  - Number of consultations in which groups felt they had had an influence on the decisions made.
  - Existence of measures ensuring proper representation for women and defence of their interests in regional and local decision-making bodies.
  - Existence of measures to support participation in consultations.

- Citizens' action
  - Number of socio-political citizens' actions organized in the community over the last 12 months.
  - Number of charitable or mutual help citizens' actions organized in the community over the last 12 months.

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[80] For this part, we have drawn on the *Guide pour un portrait de quartier* (Vivre Montréal en santé, 1993, pp. 55–57), especially the section "Les indicateurs de la vie communautaire," making the necessary adaptations to our topic.

- Number of projects initiated by coalitions.
- Number of citizens' committees created and working to represent citizens' interests over the last 12 months.
- Number of persons attending annual general meetings of groups.

4. THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

(Refers to community economic health.)

Diversity of economic sectors

- Number of local economic activities creating jobs.
- Presence of locally based business and industry.
- Presence of co-ops or non-profit organizations having social economy projects or community social/economic development projects.
- Presence of geographically accessible financial institutions offering basic services and credit access at reasonable rates.
- Presence of community associations or loan circles, savings banks or credit unions.
- Existence of a local exchange system, or networks for exchanging goods and services.
- Number of businesses developed and managed by women.
- Economic sectors developed and managed by women.
- Number of worker-managed businesses.

Local economic development

- Presence of business start-up support services targeting young people, including credit access facilities.
- Presence of groups offering help in finding employment and giving access to paid work, especially for women and young people.
- Existence of support and training services for community businesses and co-operatives (support for financing, democratic management, marketing, networking, improving working conditions, etc.).
- Community access to new technology (equipment, training).
- Innovations resulting from experiments with alternative forms of work organization.
- Pool of full- and part-time jobs in the community services sector.
- Opportunity to exert political and economic control over local economic development (participation in Centres locaux de développement, Community Economic Development Corporations, Community Development Councils).
- Presence of inter-sectoral tables (including economic players, municipalities, etc.).
- Acknowledgement of the community services sector and its activities as stakeholders in local development.
- Presence of wage equity policies in local development projects.
- Number of economic projects undertaken that emerged from educational activities organized by women's centres.
- Existence of facilities offering skills training for undertaking economic projects.

5. HEALTH CONDITIONS

(Refers to the physical and mental health of persons/adults, women and children/ as well as access to public, quasi-public and community health services, and their quality.)

Children's health

- Accessibility of specialized services for children (pediatricians, child psychiatrists).
- Presence of services or organizations to combat sexual abuse.
- Accessibility of universal, free pre- and post-natal care (breast-feeding clinics, nutritional programs for economically disadvantaged young pregnant women, support groups for breast-feeding mothers, etc.).
- Participation of community groups in coalitions on pre- and post-natal care.
- Existence of resources accessible to parents and intended to help them perform their parental responsibilities (e.g., respite care resources).
- Presence of resources promoting expression of inter-generational affection, e.g., "Grand-mères caresse," the DELIMA (développement des liens maternels) project, etc.

Physical and mental health

- Existence of organizations providing violence prevention education.
- Existence of resources for violent men.
- Accessibility of social integration resources for persons with disabilities.
- Accessibility of services for detecting cancer, HIV, suicidal tendencies, etc.
- Presence of accessible, good-quality alternative physical and mental health resources.
- Existence of transportation resources giving access to these services.
- Presence of welcoming hospices for terminally ill people.
- Existence of home support services and respite services for the sick as well as for caregivers.

Women's health

- Presence of services for women victims of violence.
- Existence of resources offering education on contraception and abortion.
- Presence of support and shelter services for pregnant teenagers.
- Presence of birthing centres offering midwives' services.
- Presence of ongoing obstetrical and gynecological services.
- Presence of resources for treating and providing temporary accommodation for women with drug addictions.
- Presence of halfway houses for women in crisis.
- Presence of special mental health resources for women.
- Presence of resources for raising awareness of menopause, for women as well as for physicians.
- Existence of transportation resources giving women access to health services.
- Number of at-risk situations discovered in the course of educational activities conducted by women's centres.

6. WORKING CONDITIONS

(Refers to paid work and its quality, as well as to the invisible work of women.)

Invisible work of women

- Existence of economic measures for recognizing the invisible work of women caring for dependent persons.
- Existence of measures for recognizing the volunteer work performed by women caring for dependent persons.

Access to employment in the local labour force

- Opportunities for finding stable paid jobs at appropriate levels, offering employee benefits, and involving work consistent with the principles of sustainable development.
- Existence of good quality job entry programs.
- Presence of job training programs.
- Existence of services for women returning to the labour market.
- Existence of measures for recognizing women's "experiential" skills (invisible or volunteer work as springboards to jobs).
- Existence of integration services or resources facilitating access to employment for persons with disabilities.
- Presence of programs to help women gain access to non-traditional careers.

Quality of working life

- Existence of measures for balancing work and family responsibilities in local workplaces.
- Existence of special training programs for working mothers (day care and transportation allowances).
- Proportion of unionized workers in local workplaces.
- On-the-job accident rate in local workplaces.
- Absenteeism rate in local workplaces.
- Proportion of jobs with employee benefits in local workplaces.
- Access to jobs with paid vacations in local workplaces.
- Level of job satisfaction in local workplaces.
- Proportion of jobs offering opportunities for advancement and control over working conditions.
- Absenteeism percentage in local workplaces.
- Relation of local salary level to poverty threshold.
- Presence of associations of self-employed persons.
- Presence of associations of community-sector workers.
- Presence of associations of persons working under employability programs.
- Presence of social and legal support and backup services for non-unionized workers.
- Existence of support and backup services for women who are workplace victims of sexual harassment or discrimination (in hiring or wages paid).

- Opportunities for experimenting with alternative ways of organizing work.

7. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT / SELF-AWARENESS / SELF-DEPENDENCE

(Refers to that which is covered by the concept of personal development, the opportunities offered for developing one's potential, as well as acquisition of resources, knowledge and skills necessary not only for life and living but also for quality of life.)

Education/learning

- Skills, knowledge (knowing how to do things, how to live, how to fulfil one's desires) and experience acquired by participation in community organizations and volunteer associations (e.g., skills in administration, accounting, organizing, communications, research, negotiation, leadership development, assertiveness, project planning, advocacy, etc.).
- Proportion of people convinced that this gave them the opportunity to regain control of their lives.
- Opportunities for personal growth in the community (opportunities for developing one's innovativeness, creativity or potential).
- Number of projects carried out, emerging from participation in self-confidence workshops.
- Opportunities in the community for acquiring basic knowledge (math, first language, etc.).
- Opportunities in the community for learning a second or third language.
- Opportunities in the community for promoting social participation (including that of persons with disabilities).

Art/culture

- Access without charge to libraries and museum documentation centres.
- Access to resources promoting creativity.
- Free access to performances, exhibitions and concerts.
- Access to art and culture through community group activities.
- Presence of performance halls.

Leisure

- Opportunities for holidays away from home.
- Variety of recreational options.
- Access to leisure through municipal or community group activities/resources (e.g., cultural centres).
- Existence of affordable organized leisure activities for youth and teenagers.
- Presence of recreational organizations promoting anti-sexist and egalitarian attitudes in sport, as well as team spirit.
- Public access to sports facilities and playgrounds.
- Existence of leisure activities promoting integration of socially excluded persons.

- Presence of leisure resources for children with disabilities.
- Universal access to free or affordable day camps, including winter or spring break.
- Access to social tourism resources.

8. CIVIC INVOLVEMENT / CITIZENSHIP

(Refers to "civic spirit," active citizenship and whatever is related to citizenship training; also refers to participation in elections and various community representational bodies, to related community initiatives, to the exercise of rights, etc. Also includes voluntary involvement: activism, volunteering.)

Training in "civic spirit" and active citizenship

- Presence of independent facilities for training in community life.
- Presence of independent facilities for training in the components of "civic spirit" (e.g., respect for others, giving help to people in need or distress, etc.).
- Presence of independent facilities for training in the ground rules for citizens' action.
- Presence of independent facilities for training in responsible criticism.
- Presence of independent facilities for training in teamwork and taking responsibility.
- Presence of independent facilities for training in speaking at meetings and use of this right.
- Presence of independent facilities for training in advocacy.
- Presence of independent facilities for training in municipal politics and the community's various representational bodies.
- Presence of organizations promoting and practising equal representation measures that facilitate women's access to various elected posts.
- Percentage of the community taking part in community associations.
- Existence of activities promoting active expressions of international solidarity.

Community initiatives

- Existence of community projects or initiatives promoting development of "civic spirit" and the exercise of citizenship.

9. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

(Refers to the quality of a community's ecosystem: water, air, noise, natural green spaces, landscape quality.)

Water quality

- Free access to shores and banks of streams, lakes or rivers.
- Opportunity to bathe and fish in clean, unpolluted water.
- Free access to good-quality drinking water.

Air quality

- Percentage of the population living in areas of severe atmospheric pollution.

Soil quality

- Rate of overexploitation of agricultural soils.
- Existence or absence of contaminated soils.
- Existence of agricultural practices to protect soil diversity.
- Existence of farms practising organic agriculture.

Waste recycling

- Presence of waste recycling services.
- Presence of organizations and businesses working in the field of waste re-use and recycling.

Natural green spaces

- Existence of natural green spaces (cleared or uncleared undeveloped areas).
- Access to natural green spaces (fields and forests) for recreational purposes.

Cleanliness of neighbourhood/community, and general quality of the locality

- Presence of environmental education organizations (eco-neighbourhoods).
- Presence of committees, groups, organizations, associations or services that monitor and provide information/training/education/advocacy on environmental issues.

V. CONCLUSION

Now that this exploratory research is complete, it seems appropriate to re-examine our original objectives and consider to what extent they may have been achieved. Our objectives were twofold: to identify social wealth criteria and to do so from a feminist perspective.

We believe that the set of *desired* indicators presented in Section IV is an initial step toward meeting the first objective of identifying social wealth criteria – criteria for valuing the work of women and the groups representing them within communities.

With the limited resources available, our study sought to use indicators to translate into reality the definition of social profitability that had been put forward by the Chantier de l'économie sociale.[81] The indicators used referred to the community's quality of life and social fabric, as well as to contribution to this quality. As far as we know, there had previously been very few attempts to describe by measurement this *social* aspect of the social economy.[82]

As for the feminist perspective adopted to perform this task, we opted in favour of a materialist approach to the question. We sought to understand and explain the situation of women based on their material circumstances – that is, on the basis of women's activities and work, rather than on the basis of a "vocation" or "nature" supposedly specific to women.

To understand the significance of women's historical contribution to the support of families and communities, and to reproduction in general within the economy – an unpaid, undervalued contribution – we drew in particular on feminist analyses of work that highlighted the other side of the economy, the "hidden side" of economic wealth, and the importance of women's reproductive labour.

These feminist analyses of labour and the economy seek to expose the entire invisible, unpaid sector of the economy, especially the work performed by women. Feminist analysts generally postulate that such work is socially productive.

Adopting the same approach, we assumed the research hypothesis that guided and provided points of reference for our field of research: women's activities, in women's or mixed-gender community groups working in social infrastructure, can be defended, supported and financed on the basis of the fact that, by their work, women are producers of quality of life, health, education and culture – in short, producers of socialization and citizenship, and sources of social productivity and, ultimately, of social wealth. The set of indicators that we developed emerges from this research hypothesis.

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[81] Once again, the definition is as follows:

> This profitability is valued in terms of contribution to democratic development, support for active citizenship, and promotion of values and initiatives for empowering individuals and communities. Social profitability thus helps enhance the quality of life and well-being of the population (Neamtan, ed., 1996, p. 6).

[82] With the possible exception of the report prepared by Antoine Moreau for the Comité sectoriel de main-d'œuvre de l'économie sociale et de l'action communautaire (Moreau, 1998).

In the end, this study seeks to provide more tools to women's groups to promote recognition of one of the basic aspects of women's reproductive labour: their work within communities, described as civic work to support, develop and restore the social fabric of communities.

In other words, the aim of this study was to achieve recognition of the *entire range* of work performed by women, wherever it may be performed, within or outside of the labour market.

The introduction of pay equity involved revaluing women's traditional jobs on the labour market (in "job ghettos"), particularly by setting valuation criteria. On that model, women's "other" traditional work in the vast field of social reproduction in turn deserves to be recognized and valued on the basis of the facts.

In policy terms, the issue is to recognize women's work, knowledge and skills acquired in the private sphere at home, and applied as well outside the home in the public sphere: within the labour market but *also* within communities, especially in maintaining the community social fabric. In our view, such recognition is an integral part of the process of achieving economic self-sufficiency for women apart from men, or apart from government. We believe that, from the standpoint of reforms, the work performed by women must be considered in its entirety, and not only in terms of "balancing professional life and family life" or of "linking paid work and household work" or "managing the double responsibility" (Toupin, 1996a, p. 73; Bélanger et al., 1998, p. 88).

With regard to follow-up on our set of indicators, we foresee this proceeding in the same spirit of democracy that drives the community indicators trend. Once again we note a crucial fact: the exercise of meeting and the effort to agree on objectives, priorities for action, and valuation criteria are all actions that in themselves constitute indicators of social progress, and thus of social profitability in a community. We may even say that this effort is as important as achieving the goal itself, if not more so.

Working together to clarify what we mean by quality of life and spelling out how we see this concept being put into practice – this in itself is a demanding democratic exercise, an extremely important civic exercise in a community. In the words of Dominique Meda, this is the exercise of "calmly thinking about the collectivity," thinking about "conditions for living well together" (Meda, 1999, pp. 117-18), and thus thinking about action to bring those conditions into existence.

Accordingly, the set of indicators presented here is intended, first and foremost, to be a tool. As emphasized by Josée Belleau as she led one of our validation groups:

> The set of social indicators can be a tool for promoting education and awareness in groups and decision-making bodies. It can also be a tool in developing strategic vision, strategic planning in a community. It can be a tool for evaluating our activities and actions (appraisal and outlook). It can be a tool in developing community action

> projects, social economy projects. In short, it is a tool that can sustain, support and strengthen "social profitability." (Appendix 4)

More immediately, while very preliminary, the set of desired after indicators developed by our team is intended as a kind of checklist to help women's groups and mixed-gender community groups, acting alone or in partnership, to determine the social profitability of their actions and their presence in a community, and their overall contribution to the communal quality of life. The indicators were designed chiefly as reference points for further progress.

Each group that adopts this instrument will thus add to it in its own way, depending on its circumstances. Once again, this is not a definitive tool, still less a magic formula. Indeed, there are no magic formulas in this area. Categories can be dropped, combined or added as needed.

For example, we had originally thought of making a specific category of "Social Relations between Women and Men." As in the other categories, it would have contained portrait-type indicators for quality of life with regard to female-male relations in a society in which women and men are equal, as well as indicators of the contribution of groups to such a society. Instead, we took an integrational, transversal approach, one that incorporates indicators reflecting this concern into each of our nine categories.

Above all, we felt it was important to establish the value of the social contribution of women and the groups they have formed, and more particularly the value of the *work* they perform to communal quality of life and social fabric. We thought the integrated approach best met this objective, at least in the first phase of the process of developing indicators of quality of life and social contribution. This does not mean the other approach ought to be rejected. To the contrary, we encourage interested groups to incorporate this new category, to develop it and to support it further.

In summary, as far as our means allowed, we hope that we have met the expectations of the women's groups that provided the impetus for this research. We hope that when the set of indicators is finalized, it will represent one more supporting argument in the long struggle for recognition of the invisible work of women's groups that represent them in the vast field of social reproduction.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Two types of concerns are expressed in the recommendations emerging from this study, drawing on suggestions from our advisory committee and focus groups. The recommendations relate to:

1. broadening of the overall perspective of the social economy, its priorities, its targets and its criteria for granting funds; and
2. development of qualitative instruments for measuring social activities.

I. Recommendations concerning broadening of the overall perspective of the social economy, its priorities, its targets and its criteria for granting funds

The Chantier de l'économie sociale and the Government of Quebec should put the spotlight back on social and collective issues of the social economy, in the spirit of the principles developed by consensus in *L'économie sociale du point de vue des femmes* (Relais-femmes, 1997). It should also modify accordingly the existing priorities, targets and criteria for granting funding in the social economy, so that projects producing social but not financial profitability may be included in funding, without being required to achieve financial profitability.

II. Recommendations concerning development of qualitative instruments for measuring social activities

This study has highlighted the almost total lack of qualitative indicators of social profitability, particularly in government policies (e.g., Quebec's Local and Regional Development and Social Economy Support Policy), and in the various projects for development of social economy indicators to date. In view of this situation,

We recommend the following:

1. Financial resources should be made available to communities so that they can undertake a democratic process to measure the quality of life and social contribution of women's groups and mixed-gender community groups.
2. In their situational analyses and fund-granting processes, both federal and provincial governments should adopt qualitative indicators of the social contribution of women's and community groups.
3. In all their programs, the different research councils (the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council or the Conseil québécois de la recherché sociale, etc.) should promote development of research on qualitative indicators of quality of life and social contribution.
4. Statistics Canada, Statistique Québec and the various other provincial statistics agencies should develop the field of qualitative measurement of social activities.

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APPENDIX 1

Composition of the eight focus groups: organizations and breakdown of their representation

Note: Several representatives of women's or community groups are of course active in a number of organizations at the same time and hold several positions simultaneously. However, we have noted only the organization each represented on the Comités régionaux d'économie sociale.

1 Women's Groups

Women's centres: 10 participants
Job search, integration or rights organizations: 4
Disabled women's groups: 1
Immigrant women's groups: 1
Fédération des femmes du Quebec (FFQ) regional branches: 1
Safe houses: 1
Regional associations or roundtables: 7 (including 2 social economy development officers)
Conseil du statut de la femme: 4
Total: 29 women representing 25 women's groups or associations (excluding the Conseil du statut de la femme from the number of these groups, but the total number of participants includes its 4 regional representatives).

2 Community groups

ROC-TROVEP: 4 participants
ACEF: 1
Ligue des droits et libertés: 1
Group of women welfare recipients: 1
Trade union federations: 2
Group with economic, social and job-related activities: 6*
Total: 15 people (12 women, 3 men) representing 10 community groups.
Note that the last group on the list creates a distortion in the total since its make-up does not conform to the same criteria as the other groups (see asterisk following).

* Unlike the other seven focus groups in which several different organizations were represented, in this case members of a single organization alone constituted the entire membership of one focus group.

APPENDIX 2

Discussion guide

Question 1
When and how were you faced with the issue of "social profitability" in your activities?

Question 2
In your experience with the Comités régionaux d'économie sociale (CRES) or with other similar bodies, on the basis of what criteria are social economy projects submitted by women's or community groups approved or rejected?

Question 3
Again in your experience with the CRES (or similar bodies):

- What kind of social economy projects are considered **profitable**? (What needs/objectives do they meet? What particular approach do they take?)
- What kind of projects are considered **unprofitable**? (What needs/objectives do they meet? What particular approach do they take?)

Question 4
Our research indicates that the "social profitability" of groups can mainly be observed through the social impact of their activities or positive effects on the community.

- Do you agree with this finding?
- In your experience, would there be other ways of observing social profitability?

Question 5
Some social benefits of the activities of such groups have already been highlighted (examples were sent to you with our invitation letter). Drawing on your knowledge of the community, can you list the benefits that *you* have been able to observe, particularly for women and their immediate circle?

Question 6
Again drawing on your knowledge of the community, how could these benefits actually be *measured*?

Question 7
In your experience with the CRES, apart from the argument that projects submitted for consideration are economically unprofitable, are there other barriers to recognition of their social "performance"? (Where do the barriers arise? What kind of barriers are they?)

Question 8
If you had been **the** person to decide on the usefulness of social economy projects submitted by women's groups – or community groups serving women – on the basis of their social "yield," on what would you have based your decision? What should be "measured" in this regard? (In other words, have you any suggestions for indicators?)

Question 9
[Summarize what has been said to this point.] In all that has been said today, what do you see as most important?

Question 10
The aim of our discussion was to identify indicators or measures of the social value of social economy projects run by women's groups or by community groups serving women. What might have been overlooked on this subject? Or, if you were the discussion leader, what other question would you put to the group?

Question 11
What recommendations or suggestions would you have for us about our indicators, our way of proceeding, how we conducted our interviews, the questions put to practitioners/users, etc.?

(If needed, add questions that seem to be relevant and do not appear in the discussion guide.)

APPENDIX 3

Explanations on the direction of the Relais-femmes consultation concerning validation of a set of indicators of social profitability (invitation letter sent to validation group participants)

Greetings!

First of all, thank you for agreeing to participate in this validation phase of Relais-femmes' research on "social profitability." We are now at the last stage of this study, called for by l'R des Centres de femmes and the FFQ in 1997, and intended to support, prove and measure the social profitability of the activities of women's groups in the social economy. In this last phase of our work, we wish to check whether the set of indicators that we are sending you today meets your expectations expressed during our focus groups last spring.

The following document consists of a set of "community indicators," that is a collection of tangible signs of a community's quality of life and social fabric.

In reality this is a *draft* set of community indicators. The indicators are listed simply as examples that might make you think of other possible indicators more closely related to your activities in your own groups. It is a draft because the indicators have not yet undergone testing – which is exactly what we plan to do with you.

As you will see, we have grouped the various indicators in nine major categories, which may also be called "social concerns" or issues, and which give evidence of the quality of life and social fabric to which a community aspires. The categories are: material living conditions; physical environment; social environment; economic environment; health conditions; working conditions; personal development, self-awareness, self-dependence; civic involvement; and natural environment.

These are "headings" or "umbrellas" under which tangible, observable signs of social concerns can be grouped – that is, indicators. As a representative of a group concerned with one or more of these issues (or social concerns), we ask you to identify various aspects of the social contribution of your group (its social profitability) by observable signs, of the type we have listed as examples in the set of indicators we are sending you today.

As you embark on this exercise, you should keep in mind the following question: **In what way does the group I belong to contribute to the development and revitalization of the social fabric of various sectors?** In a way, this question is the perspective from which to interpret your practices, or the lens through which to examine your activities to be able to identify them. The answer to this question will determine the various aspects of the social profitability of your group.

An appropriate scenario might be the following:
You represent women's groups and community groups on the Centre local de développement (CLD) in your region, and you have to defend the social profitability of

the activities of a certain group to various partners who care little about the social aspect of development. By what observable, tangible signs will you prove the social usefulness of the activity of that group and thereby succeed in convincing your partners?

The attached set of indicators is thus provided to help you find out how you yourself affect the quality of the social fabric of your community in various fields. We wish to check how any of our nine major categories, as well as the indicators they contain, might help you identify what you are doing. If you think that these indicators are not useful, do not hesitate to make them more specific or to change them.

Obviously you cannot supply indicators in all nine categories, since groups generally focus their action on one or another aspect of the community fabric. Instead we hope our set of indicators will help you determine your social contribution and how it could be expressed by tangible, observable signs (and not necessarily in accounting terms, we should note).

Lastly, the idea here is not to assemble a master-list of indicators applicable to all groups. That would not be possible or even desirable. Indicators must emerge from the actual circumstances of each community's social fabric. For this reason, each group must attempt to examine its own particular activities to find these tangible, observable signs of its social contribution. This does not mean that it is necessary to start from zero: to avoid that is the very purpose of our study and the reason for developing this draft set of indicators, drawing on earlier experiments in developing community indicators.

In closing, we should note that we are not asking you to describe your group's mission or objectives (e.g., ensuring access to housing for disadvantaged population categories). Instead we ask you to describe how this mission is expressed in the actual circumstances of the community fabric, by what observable signs it can be tracked (e.g., by the presence of community resources helping tenants, or resources for setting up co-ops, etc.).

We shall go through this exercise together at our meeting with the help of a discussion leader. Please note that it will take place on

March xx, 1999, from [time] to [time], at [place]

We hope you enjoy reading the material we are sending you, and we ask you to consider what the tangible signs of the social contribution of your group might be.

APPENDIX 4

Discussion facilitator's plan followed during indicator validation meetings[83]

9:30 a.m.
GREETINGS, INTRODUCTIONS
Going around the table, each participant, in turn, gives her name, position within her group, and personal or group interest in the session.

9:50 a.m.
BACKGROUND AND PROCEDURE FOR THE DAY
Main objective (to present the social indicators, comment on them and validate them).
Louise Toupin: five minutes on the major directions of the research project (giving the context).
Josée Belleau: two minutes on the day's program (workshop format).

10:00 a.m.
INTRODUCTION: THE SET OF SOCIAL INDICATORS
Clarify what are the social indicators presented today.

They are a tool, a means for supporting our actions and our demands; they are not a magic formula and will not allow all our hopes to be met. They are a useful means to an end, and like all means have their limits.

Analogy with another tool in common use for some time: gender-based analysis (GBA), which is a tool for revealing the differing effects or impacts that programs, policies and measures have on men and women. GBA can support women's demands and actions, somewhat like statistics on violence against women, male-female salary gaps, etc.

What must be kept in mind is that the set of social indicators can be a tool for educating and raising the awareness of groups and decision-making bodies. It can also be a tool in developing strategic vision or strategic planning in a community. It can be a tool for evaluating our activities and actions (appraisal and outlook). And it can be a tool in developing community action projects in the social economy.

In short, it is a tool for sustaining, supporting and strengthening "social profitability."

THE SET OF SOCIAL INDICATORS COVERS TWO MAIN ASPECTS, WHICH ARE DISTINCT BUT CLOSELY RELATED:

1) The set allows us to better specify, identify and illustrate what we mean by "quality of life," the quality of life that we wish to have in our community, in our locality.

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[83] This discussion facilitator's plan was prepared by Josée Belleau for the purpose of validation of the set of indicators of social profitability emerging from our research. The plan may not be used for any purpose without her permission. E-mail <jsbl@aei.ca>.

The social indicators emphasize living conditions, health conditions and working conditions, as well as interpersonal and inter-group relations. They are reference points that enable us to illustrate and make a little more specific what we want in terms of quality of life, what will enable people to improve their living conditions and their relations with others. The social indicators put little or no emphasis on production or overconsumption of goods that are not essential or vital.

2) Second, the set of social indicators enables women's groups, community groups and social economy enterprises to clarify how their actions, activities and services help improve the quality of life of individuals, their immediate circle, and the community or locality.

Finally, let us be cautious. We are not using this set of social indicators as fixed criteria for excluding activities, groups or projects that (from our viewpoint) do not conform perfectly with all the criteria. Let us not fall into the trap of competition between groups or projects. No group or enterprise, even the most community- or feminist-oriented, can claim to have all the intended impacts on the people it reaches or serves. Let us therefore be proud of what we do, but without making false claims or being overly accommodating.

10:15 a.m.
WHO HAS ALREADY READ THE DOCUMENT?
Collect general comments on the document overall, as well as practical or theoretical questions that came up in reading it.

10:30 a.m.
WORKSHOP ON INDICATORS
On the board or on large sheets of paper, draw big, overlapping circles.

Ask the women to choose around four or five priority themes from the list of social indicators – for example, the themes with which they feel most familiar because their experience and their knowledge enable them to comment on and add to the contents.

Among the themes not chosen, suggest selecting one that participants are not in the habit of discussing often. This could bring to light experience or knowledge of our daily life that is not sufficiently highlighted. At the very least, doing this will enable participants to become aware of the subject.

Devote 15 minutes to each theme, and add 5 to 8 minutes if participants wish to discuss further.
(5 themes x 15 minutes = 75 minutes)

Reserve 10 minutes at the end of the workshop to go back to questions or concerns left unresolved.

12:00 NOON
LUNCH

1:30 to 2:30 p.m.
WORKSHOP: HOW TO USE THE INDICATORS

On the basis of imaginary or real-life scenarios, discuss social indicators, both their content and their application.

The set of social indicators can support our work and our action. It helps illustrate more concretely the objectives we seek, the effects we seek, as well as the real impacts of completed projects and activities.

A) A centre activity: 20 minutes
Let us take a group activity; choose a sustainable activity of the group, one that benefits from sustainable resources and has a sustainable participation. Among the social indicators, which seem to you relevant for explaining the targeted objectives and the real effects of the activity? Let's be realistic, let's not exaggerate the effects lest we lose credibility. The effects desired are not always the actual effects, and vice versa.

Conclusion:
Depending on your point of view, and relying on the set of social indicators, there are some activities, services and projects that generate more social profitability than others. Those are our favourite projects, according to our scale of values, and we will promote and defend them with all our power. At the same time, we must realize that even the projects that are dearest to us cannot contribute to all the social indicators.

B) A social economy project that you know: 15 minutes[84]
If you do not have an example, here is an imaginary case: a plastic waste recycling co-operative, which manufactures green bins for selective recovery, and sorting boxes for the kitchen, garage or garden.

Conclusion:
There are also activities, services and projects that contribute to the quality of life of individuals and the community, perhaps a little less than you wish, or else in a field of which you know little. It is important not to reject them simply because they do not conform in every way with our ideology. At the same time, we must acknowledge that even our most valued projects are not enough to contribute to all social indicators.

C) A private enterprise (SME) project: 10 minutes[85]
Example: a car and truck rental agency.

Conclusion:
It may be worthwhile to promote social responsibility on the part of local private businesses, even if these are not community action projects or social economy projects. For example,

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[84] Points B and C were not discussed for lack of time.

[85] See previous note.

they can be encouraged to make all their purchases locally, to re-invest in the community by donations or sponsorships for advocacy groups, to hire a woman in a non-traditional career position, to implement wage equity, to put in place measures for balancing family and work responsibilities, to hire at least one young woman when a job is created, etc. For a business seeking to turn a profit, this can be a different, modest way of contributing to the quality of life of the community.

2:30 p.m.
BREAK

2:45 p.m.
FINAL REVIEW OF SOCIAL INDICATORS
Returning to the list of social indicators, we take up one or more themes on which we have not had time to conclude the discussion or explore all facets to our satisfaction. The previous exercise may have given rise to better understanding of the tool.

3:15 p.m.
EVALUATION OF THE TOOL AND THE CONSULTATION

a) In what way can the tool support our action and our demands? What it cannot do; what remains to be clarified or developed.

b) Were your expectations met or not? Was the way of proceeding satisfactory or not? Was the discussion leader's guidance satisfactory or not?

c) Josée: Thank you for your participation and your contribution to evaluating and improving this set of social indicators.

d) Louise or Nadine: Explain the further steps planned for the research project and the consultations.

Discussion leader's plan: Josée Belleau

APPENDIX 5

Various categories of social indicators

A. Supranational social indicators

The social indicators of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are among the most important that have been produced. We shall take a brief look at them.

1) The OECD List of Social Indicators

"The Social Indicators . . . are designed to measure trends in individual well-being, as reflected in common Social Concerns." This is how the OECD presented *The OECD List of Social Indicators* in 1982 (p. 9). In the introduction, the Organization maintained that it was "first among international organizations to initiate an indicator development program," in 1970, taking an approach that, concentrating "on social conditions and trends perceived in non-monetary terms . . . [tried] to measure the level of individual well-being directly" (OECD, 1982, p. 7).

The OECD thus compiled a list of 33 indicators relating to 15 social concerns, covering what the Organization then regarded as the entire social field, which it divided into eight categories. We present these eight categories here since several countries and organizations later drew on them in their social reports. We also include the 15 subsidiary social concerns (OECD, 1982, p. 13).

The OECD list of social concerns

1. In the field of health, two social concerns: **life expectancy** and **healthy life expectancy**.
2. In the field of education and learning, two social concerns: **use of educational facilities** and **learning**.
3. In the field of employment and quality of working life, two social concerns: **availability of employment** and **quality of working life**.
4. In the field of time and leisure, one social concern: **use of time**.
5. In the field of command over goods and services, two social concerns: **income** and **wealth**.
6. In the field of physical environment, three social concerns: **housing conditions, accessibility to services** and **environmental nuisances**.
7. In the field of social environment, one concern: **social attachment**.

8. In the field of personal safety, two social concerns: **exposure to risk** and **perceived threat**.

In the mid-1980s, the OECD terminated its social indicators program because of a lack of consensus between member countries on comparative indicators of well-being. Since then the Organization has confined itself to social reports covering only a few fields: education, science, health and environment (Noll, 1997, p.7). However, the 1982 publication was a milestone, and many countries and various organizations have drawn on it.

Among other supranational initiatives on social indicators, we note, starting from the late 1980s: the *Index of Social Welfare*, prepared in 1989 by the Caracas Group or South Commission (Henderson, 1995, pp. 167–69), the World Bank's *Social Indicators of Development* (1987) and, most important, the *Human Development Report* of the UNDP, published annually since 1990.

2) The UNDP's human development indicators

Published for the first time in 1990, the *Human Development Report* offered a new approach to measuring human development: it combined three kinds of measures in one "composite" indicator of human development. This is the human development index (HDI). The three indicators are life expectancy, educational level and income. The human development index is the average of these three components. It is a quantitative index.

The three indicators are based on three basic components of human development: longevity, knowledge and standard of living: "Longevity is measured by life expectancy. Knowledge is measured by a combination of adult literacy (two-thirds weight) and mean years of schooling (one-third weight). Standard of living is measured by purchasing power, based on real GDP per capita adjusted for the local cost of living (purchasing power parity, or PPP)" (UNDP, 1994, p. 91).

Since 1990, the HDI has been refined: the three indicators have been broken down and "adjusted" to take into account especially inequality between different population groups within certain countries (e.g., between blacks and whites in the United States, or between residents of richer regions of Mexico and those living in Chiapas), and also to reflect disparities between women and men as well as income distribution gaps.

Other components are added each year to the original indicators, thus weighting the HDI. For example, since 1995 the gender-related development index (GDI) has been added, and the gender empowerment measure (GEM). Since 1997, the human poverty index has been added. The human development index is thus being corrected to take into account these types of social inequality.

In each case the component elements of the new indexes are specified and calculated so as to obtain more refined international comparisons of the HDI, ranking performance by country. Thus it was that certain Western countries that had topped the list in human development in the early 1990s saw their ratings fall when the gender-related development index was introduced. This was the case for Canada, which (after heading the list) fell to ninth place once the GDI was taken into consideration.

This is a method of quantitative calculation, which has given rise to criticism on the part of some observers. One of these is Ignacy Sachs of the International Research Centre on Environment and Development. Criticizing the HDI, "which assumes quantitative and composite indicators," he suggests instead the following:

> Rather than aggregating different indicators into a composite indicator, I give my preference to what is called an approach by country profile, a genuine array of measures including many non-aggregated indicators. Further, the search for quantitative indicators must not proceed at the expense of qualitative valuation, lest it create appearances of an objectivity that is superficial and fallacious (Sachs, 1998, p. 50).

As in the case of the OECD, these are statistical, quantitative indicators, leaving little room for qualitative indicators that are, for example, indicators of perception. Also called "subjective" indicators, they are nevertheless essential for perceiving and measuring "well-being." We shall see that certain community indicators take this aspect into account.

B) National and specialized indicators

Alongside international organizations, various countries have adopted social reports, national social accounts (called "Social Trends" in Canada and other English-speaking countries, or "Social Portraits" in Europe), to evaluate periodically the living conditions of their populations, as well as how these conditions change. In the case of Quebec, we note the IDEES (demographic, economic, environmental and social indexes); like other attempts, these are evidence of the same concern within Quebec, emerging from the regional county municipalities (Conseil des affaires, 1990).[86]

Along with these general social reports, other, more specialized indicators have appeared, covering more specific population sectors or categories, such as health, education, the family, child poverty and gender equality.

In the case of children, we note the study of the Canadian Council on Social Development entitled *The Progress of Canada's Children 1997*. In the case of women, we note the document *Economic Gender Equality Indicators*, published by the Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women in Canada.[87]

As regards health, we note the Fordham Index of Social Health, developed in the United States and adapted for Canada by Human Resources Development Canada (Brink and Zeesman, 1998).

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[86] See especially Ch. 6.

[87] See Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 1997.

The Index of Social Health is close to the concept of social development, on the basis of which the Conseil de la santé et du bien-être québécois is seeking to develop a "social development measure" for Quebec (Bernier, 1999).[88]

Similar too are the *Quality of Life Index for Ontario*, the *Index of Social Progress*, the *Index of Economic Well-Being for Canada*, and the *Genuine Progress Indicator*, all analyzed and critiqued in Bernier (1999), in terms of possible adaptation to a measure of social development for Quebec.

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[88] The text by Michel Bernier was the working document for the seminar on "La mesure du développement social" [Measuring social development], held last March 26 in Montréal under the auspices of the Conseil de la santé et du bien-être québécois. At the time of writing (May 1999), we learned that the Conseil québécois de la recherche sociale and the Conseil de la santé et du bien-être intend shortly to invite "Quebec researchers to present their submissions for development of an index for measuring social development." See Ducas, 1999. This article also states that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities is developing a "system for monitoring quality of life," based on eight indicators intended to measure well-being in communities. We have not been able to learn what these indicators are.

Projects Funded Through Status of Women Canada's Policy Research Fund
Call for Proposals:

The Relationship Between the Changing Role of the State, Women's Paid and Unpaid Work, and Women's Vulnerability to Poverty *

Policy Options to Improve Standards for Women Garment Workers in Canada and Internationally
Lynda Yanz, Bob Jeffcott, Deena Ladd, Joan Atlin
Maquila Solidarity Network (Canada)

Disability-related Support Arrangements, Policy Options and Implications for Women's Equality
The Roeher Institute
Marcia Rioux, Michael Bach, Melanie Panitch, Miriam Ticoll, Patricia Israel

Gender on the Line: Technology, Restructuring and the Reorganization of Work in the Call Centre Industry
Ruth M. Buchanan and Sarah Koch-Schulte

Policies, Work and Employability Among Aboriginal Women
Le Partenariat Mikimon, Association des Femmes Autochtones du Québec / INRS-Culture et Société
Carole Lévesque, Nadine Trudeau, Joséphine Bacon, Christiane Montpetit Marie-Anne Cheezo, Manon Lamontagne, Christine Sioui Wawanoloath

Social and Community Indicators for Evaluating Women's Work in Communities
Relais-femmes
Louise Toupin and Nadine Goudreault

Women and Homework: The Canadian Legislative Framework
Stephanie Bernstein, Katherine Lippel, Lucie Lamarche, Diane Demers

Unpaid Work and Macroeconomics: New Discussions, New Tools for Action
Isabella Bakker

* Some of these papers are still in progress and not all titles are finalized.